3.18.14

Library of the Theological Seminary,

PRINCETON, N. J.

Presented by Dr. F. L. Patton.

BT 1101 .T95 1887
Tymms, T. Vincent, 1842-
1921.
The mystery of God

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
MAR 18 1914
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THE

# MYSTERY OF GOD.

*A CONSIDERATION OF SOME INTELLECTUAL HINDRANCES TO FAITH.*

BY

T. VINCENT TYMMS.

'*That they may know the Mystery of God, even Christ, in Whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden.*'—PAUL THE APOSTLE.

*SECOND EDITION.*

NEW YORK:
ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH & CO.,
38, WEST TWENTY-THIRD STREET.
1887.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2022 with funding from
Princeton Theological Seminary Library

https://archive.org/details/mysteryofgodcons00tymm_0

# PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE alterations made in the present edition are few, and, with two or three exceptions, are only slight verbal emendations. Two or three sentences respecting Force, which appeared susceptible of a false interpretation, have been cancelled, and a few lines have been added to the closing summary of Chapter VI. to avoid the inconvenience of referring to a previous page. The only change of importance is the addition of about five pages on the subject of animal suffering (p. 134), which will, I trust, strengthen the argument on the Mystery of Evil by supplementing those general observations on apparent defects in Nature which are retained as they stood in the first edition. In supplying these paragraphs I revert to an original intention which was abandoned through a fear of either encumbering the argument with a discussion of inordinate length, or else of causing misunderstanding by a too fragmentary treatment of an enormous theme. Some more explicit statement, however, of what the Bible teaches on this matter seemed desirable, and is now offered to the reader, though in a necessarily imperfect form. The subject is little referred to except by those who question the Creator's goodness, and few Christians seem to be

aware that the Bible has a consistent doctrine concerning it. If any attempt has been made to define this doctrine, or to gather into a connected form the statements and suggestions of Scripture, it has escaped my notice. The moral difficulty is almost entirely a modern experience, and is due to that deepened sympathy with suffering which has been diffused by Christianity in conjunction with a closer and more scientific observation of animal life. It seems certain, however, that the growing pressure of this difficulty will constrain Christian teachers to consider it more attentively, and we may anticipate that, as in many similar cases before, the result of diligent inquiry will be the discovery of rich treasures of light hidden in the Bible—hidden only because man's eyes have not been touched with the burning eye-salve of troubled thought.

This preface must not close without an acknowledgment of the generous way in which the first edition has been received by reviewers of the most diversified opinions. But while thanking public writers for their unstinted commendations, I derive an even deeper satisfaction from private assurances that in not a few cases the great object of the work has been attained. Such results not only repay the labour of writing, but reflect a cheering light upon dark passages of mental history without which this volume could never have been written. Only one who has himself been tempted to renounce faith, and leave the eternal morrow to take thought for itself, can have full sympathy with those who suffer from that malady of thought which is so rife in modern days. In issuing a new edition my

earnest hope is that many whose faces I may never see will find herein the touch of a friendly spirit, and some encouragement to fight their doubts, and face the spectres of the mind, until at length they find a stronger faith. Human words at best are weak, yet

> 'Words are things ; and a small drop of ink
> Falling like dew upon a thought . . .'

may aid another mind to think of Him who is never far from any honest heart, and to trust the mystic guidance of that Power which is with us

> 'In the night,
> Which makes the darkness and the light,
> And dwells not in the light alone.'

T. V. T.

CLAPTON, *Nov. 9th*, 1886.

# INTRODUCTION.

THIS book is an endeavour to consider the chief intellectual hindrances to Christian Faith which are prevalent in our day. From their independent titles, the various chapters might appear to be self-contained essays on separate subjects; but unless I have failed in my design, it will be found that they are a consecutive series of arguments, whereby a single and continuous line of thought is advanced. It has been my endeavour to dispose at the outset of the most fundamental objections to Christianity, and thence to ascend step by step, leaving no necessary foothold unsecured, until at length objections which proceed from Theists who are 'almost Christians' are considered.

In dealing with anti-Christian and non-Christian writers, I have striven to observe the golden rule. If full justice has not been done to the form and spirit of their arguments in the passages selected for quotation, or in the replies made, it has not been through any wish to disguise or evade their significance and force. Difficulties flinched from or minimised for temporary relief usually avenge themselves at some future time by assuming more formidable shapes; and

he who would help others towards the 'yea' of a well-assured conviction must measure with them the full force of every 'nay' which obstructs their path.

In dealing with critical objections which, if disputed, would involve minute and voluminous discussions, I have borne in mind a secret whispered to me by a distinguished Queen's Counsel, who said, 'I win my cases by admissions.' A full review of Christian controversy would show that more damage has been done to faith by indiscreet contentions for dubious and non-essential points than by any hostile attacks. The fate of Christianity has frequently been staked by its advocates upon the defence of certain positions which have eventually proved indefensible. Mindful of this error, which has been several times repeated in our day, I have not contended for all that I believe, but by making occasional loans to the other side, have striven to show that the Christian faith will not be injuriously affected if many current controversies are ultimately decided in a way that the majority of Christian advocates neither desire nor expect. Apart from any other advantages which this method may possess, it will, I trust, help some to perceive that God's gift does not hang on grammar, and that there is no valid reason why we should postpone faith in the oracles of God until every vexatious dispute about their literary vehicle has been terminated.

It does not fall within the design of this book to give an exposition of Christian doctrines. Though adducing reasons for regarding Christ as Divine, I offer no metaphysical theory of the Incarnation, and give no theological opinions respecting the mode of His work as

man's Redeemer. The subjects treated of are prior to these great themes, and may with advantage be separately discussed. They are subjects which cannot be incessantly reopened by Christian preachers in their ordinary addresses. Without sinking into mere disputers with absent or silenced opponents, they must generally treat as established truths the existence of a Personal God, the possibility of Revelation, the credibility under proper safeguards of human testimony to superhuman events, and the veracity in particular of those documents which are the avowed basis of their instructions. It is no secret, however, that on all these points multitudes have been deeply affected by the arguments, and especially by the tone, of much contemporary literature, in which it is directly asserted or tacitly implied that the foundations of the Christian faith have been removed by modern advances in wisdom and knowledge. Christians are freely charged with an unworthy adhesion to their beliefs, not because reasonably convinced of their soundness, but on account of their ideal beauty, their consolatory tendency, and the gratification they promise to the natural desires of mankind for happiness and continued life. To a man who prefers truth to the fairest of illusions, any uncertainty respecting the justice of these accusations must be unspeakably painful. If the heart is to be allowed free play for its affections, and its witness is to be entertained without the fear of self-deception, it is indispensable that clear convictions should be obtained with regard to those elementary principles which are so boldly challenged.

I do not imagine that the most prevalent hindrances

to faith are intellectual, or that in any individual they are such exclusively. The purest natures who are troubled with a strife between the intellect and the heart will confess that they are not exempt from the common struggles of humanity between conscience and inclination. Those who are most truly alive to the beauty of Christ and the sublimity of the destiny to which He calls, will own that the conditions of discipleship would severely try their spirits if no mental uncertainties deterred. The life of faith is not a mere assent of the intellect to certain propositions, and it cannot therefore be produced by logic. But faith must needs include some convictions which may be put into propositions, and either be denied or affirmed by the reason. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews justly regards it as an axiom that 'he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him.' Therefore a denial or a doubt of the several affirmations into which this sentence may be resolved must preclude the existence of faith in its higher and more spiritual form. Moral hindrances can only be removed by moral suasion or discipline. Spiritual hindrances can only be removed by spiritual influences. But intellectual doubts which relate to matters of historic fact, physical possibility, or rational probability, can only be removed by appeals to the understanding. When the mind has been convinced, a man may still be destitute of personal trust in God, but a channel will be opened through which appeals to his conscience and affections may afterwards be made.

If the thoughts presented in this book should avail

to clear from any minds some intellectual hindrances to faith, and should allay the misgivings of others who believe, yet feel some tremors when heavy blows are dealt against the deepest foundations of their creed, I shall feel well rewarded. I should not regard any work as wasted if it speeded one troubled thinker to the place where Nicodemus stood when he said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do those things which Thou doest except God be with him'; or where Philip stood on the night before the Crucifixion, saying, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.' Believing as I do far more concerning Christ than is here written, I am persuaded that all who accept Him as the 'faithful and true Witness' concerning unseen and eternal things will in due time come to know Him as the revealed 'Mystery of God'; and regarding Him as the Word, the Utterance of the Eternal Mind, will confess that in Him there must needs be hidden for our enlightenment 'all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.'

# CONTENTS.


| CHAPTER | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| | PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION | v |
| | INTRODUCTION | viii |
| I. | MATERIALISM | 1 |
| II. | PANTHEISM | 36 |
| III. | THEISM | 67 |
| IV. | THE STRAITS OF THEISM WITHOUT REVELATION | 97 |
| V. | THE MYSTERY OF EVIL | 116 |
| VI. | THE MIRACLE OF REVELATION | 149 |
| VII. | THE ORACLES OF GOD | 181 |
| | Section I.—The Place of a Book in Revelation | 183 |
| | „ II.—The Method and Spirit of Inquiry concerning the Bible | 188 |
| | „ III.—Some Elementary Facts respecting the Bible | 190 |
| | „ IV.—The Unity of the Bible | 192 |
| | „ V.—The alleged Verbal Infallibility of the Bible | 200 |
| | „ VI.—The General Credibility of the Bible | 209 |
| | „ VII.—The Presence of Divine Elements in the Bible | 227 |
| | „ VIII.—The Prevalence of Divine Elements in the Bible | 248 |
| VIII. | THE PERSON OF CHRIST | 262 |
| IX. | THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST | 292 |
| X. | THE LIFE OF FAITH | 327 |

'*For life, with all it yields of joy and woe,*
*And hope and fear . . . . . .*
*Is just our chance o' the prize of learning love,*
*How love might be, hath been indeed, and is;*
*And that we hold thenceforth to the uttermost*
*Such prize despite the envy of the world,*
*And, having gained truth, keep truth: that is all.*'

ROBERT BROWNING.

'*And still the skies are opened as of old*
*To the entrancèd gaze, ay, nearer far*
*And brighter than of yore; and Might is there,*
*And Infinite Purity is there, and high*
*Eternal Wisdom, and the calm clear face*
*Of Duty, and a higher, stronger Love*
*And Light in one, and a new, reverend Name,*
*Greater than any and combining all;*
*And over all, veiled with a veil of cloud,*
*God set far off, too bright for mortal eyes.*'

LEWIS MORRIS.

THE

# MYSTERY OF GOD.

## CHAPTER I.

### MATERIALISM.

FROM the well at Sychar the voice of Christ has gone out into all the earth, saying, 'God is a Spirit.' To men who thirst 'for the living God,' He declares that He is a Father whose desire is towards His offspring, and who seeks for their reverence and love. If these things are so, there must be 'a spirit in man,' and intercourse between the Divine Father and his human children is possible. A life of faith in the Unseen God thus becomes man's reasonable service, and religion in the Christian sense must consist in the maintenance of filial intercourse with the Father, and the loyal discharge of all those duties which paternal wisdom may assign.

Materialism strikes at the root of these ideas by saying, 'There is no spirit. There is only one substance known to us—viz., matter—and this is sufficient to account for all the facts of human consciousness and of the universe around. Thought and feeling are only products of matter highly organized. God and immortality are dreams.'

In this dogmatic shape the creed has comparatively few professors. Although positive in form, it involves immense negations, from which cautious minds draw back. It presents no allurement to the heart, and affords no incentive to social duty. But although from these causes its open champions are not numerous, it practically underlies most of those anti-Christian theories which are rife in our day. Various parties which busy themselves with devices to render life bearable and society possible without the recognition of God, put other and more inviting names on their banners, but their schemes are none the less based on an assumption that materialism is true. The theory, moreover, gives a philosophical expression to the unreasoned opinions of multitudes who are indifferent to all world-bettering plans and enthusiasms, and have bidden farewell to all personal aspirations which look beyond the narrow range of immediate interests and desires. The theory is also important because many who regard it with repugnance are disquieted by the confident tone of its advocates, who say continually, 'Where is now your God?' While the conviction, or even a strong suspicion, remains that matter is all, God an illusion, and worship the outpouring of emotion into nothingness, men have no heart to study the historic evidences of Christianity, or to consider the Person of Christ. On many grounds, therefore, it becomes needful to so far examine the Materialistic theory of the universe as to ascertain whether it affords a reasonable and scientific basis for a godless life.

In pursuing this inquiry, it will be useful to trace the

origin and growth of current theories, for by so doing we shall not merely investigate abstract opinions, but follow the lines of reasoning by which they have been reached, and catch some glimpses of the men who helped to form them, and were in part formed by them. The advantage of such a course could scarcely be better expressed than in the words of the late Professor Ferrier relative to the general study of the History of Philosophy: 'We shall find that we are, in fact, studying the development of our own reason in its most essential forms, with this difference, that the great problem which in our minds is worked out in a hurried manner, and within contracted limits, is evolved at leisure in the history of philosophy, and presented in juster and more enlarged proportions. The history of philosophy is, in fact, philosophy itself *taking its time*, and seen through a magnifying-glass.'*

If we turn first of all to the Bible as our most familiar treasury of ancient religious thought, we find clear records of Materialism. The author of 'Ecclesiastes' gives utterance to many gloomy notions, which show that in his day there were Hebrews who held that men were no better than the beasts. These passages are so familiar, that it is needless to quote them here. It should be observed, however, that the royal preacher found Materialism a very gloomy creed, paralysing all endeavours after righteousness, mingling wormwood with every cup of pleasure, and throwing a cold shadow over the beauty of nature and the whole course of human life from birth to death. This despondency will generally be found haunting the Materialist; and

* Professor Ferrier's Works, Vol. II., p. 2.

the rejection of morality, so conspicuous in parts of 'Ecclesiastes,' will be found the invariable outcome of Materialistic belief as we trace it downwards to our own day.

According to the statements of Mencius, a gross system of Materialism, founded by Yang-Choo, was widely spread over the Chinese empire about the close of the fourth, or early in the third century before Christ. Its author had the full courage of his convictions, and advocated the freest indulgence of every appetite as the only real enjoyment within man's reach. 'Wherein people differ,' he wrote, 'is the matter of life; wherein they agree is death. While they are alive we have the distinctions of intelligence and stupidity, honorableness and meanness; when they are dead we have so much stinking rottenness, decaying away:—this is the common lot. Yet intelligence and stupidity, honorableness and meanness, are not in one's power, neither is that condition of putridity, decay and utter disappearance . . . . All are born and all die; the intelligent and the stupid, the honorable and the mean. At ten years old some die. The virtuous and the sage die; the ruffian and the fool die also.' Because of these things, he counselled men to renounce scruples about propriety and righteousness as sheer folly; seizing all possible pleasures with avidity, and enduring inevitable evils with cynical contempt. 'Being once Born, take your life as it comes and endure it; and seeking to enjoy yourself as you desire, so await the approach of death. When you are about to die, treat the thing with indifference and endure it; seeking to accomplish your departure, so abandon yourself to

annihilation.' To show the nothingness of virtue and praise, Yang-Choo related the lives of four sages who encountered great hardships and afflictions, and at last went down sorrowfully to the grave. 'Since their death,' he observed, 'they have had a grand fame that will last through myriads of ages. But that fame is what no one who cares for what is real would choose. Celebrate them; they do not know it. Reward them; they do not know it. Their fame is no more to them than to the trunk of a tree or a clod of earth.' In contrast to these 'sages' he described the careers of two 'villains,' who never made themselves 'bitter by the thought of propriety and righteousness,' and came brightly to death. 'During their life they had the joy of gratifying their desires. Since their death they have had the evil fame of folly and tyranny. But the reality of enjoyment is what no fame can give. Reproach them; they do not know it. Praise them; they do not know it. Their ill fame is no more to them than to the trunk of a tree, or to a clod of earth.'* Such a theory presents no novel features, but deserves attention because so similar to many others with which we are familiar. Although an isolated Chinese philosopher, Yang-Choo seems in many places a mere echo of the Hebrew preacher, and is chiefly remarkable for the assumed gaiety with which he discusses the emptiness of life which graver natures lament.

In India, it is said that only one—and that a somewhat obscure—philosophy is Materialistic. It has,

* 'The Chinese Classics,' by Dr. James Legge, Vol. II., pp. 97, 98, 100.

indeed, been well pointed out that the Hindoo mind is too mystical and imaginative to find contentment in a system so essentially prosaic.

The historic sources of modern European Materialism have to be sought in Greece. In the seventh century before Christ, Thales, the 'father of philosophy,' began the long labour of searching after the cause and primary element of all that is. He could not, like the multitude, rest content with the ancient myths which Homer and Hesiod had beautified, nor could he silence the questions which arose in his own mind concerning the origin of things. His conclusion was, that the only permanent and real thing in the universe is water. Aristotle says that probably he arrived at this opinion from observing that the seeds of all things are moist, that all nourishment is moist, that heat is generated from moisture, and that life is sustained by heat.* This, however childish it may seem to modern ears, was a wonderful effort of thought in his day, and was the germ of all truly scientific observation. Cicero ascribes to Thales a belief in an all-presiding and framing mind,† but Aristotle was far more likely to be correct. After Thales, Anaximander taught that matter was the beginning and end of all things, but he only qualified it as indeterminate or chaotic substance. Then followed Anaximenes, who fixed on air, and his pupil Diogenes of Apollonia, who added that air is sensible and intelligent. Heraclitus is generally said to have contended against these theories in favour of fire, but it is doubt-

* 'Metaphysics,' Book I., chap. iii.

† 'Nature of the Gods,' Book I., chap. x.

ful whether fire was anything more to him than an emblem of ceaseless motion.

Democritus first propounded the famous atomic theory which through many changes has survived until our day. He taught that matter is eternal, and that it consists of minute atoms so small as to be incapable of division, and alike in every quality, though of various shapes and sizes. Between these atoms he saw that there must be space, or else they would not be divided. Hence he said the universe consists of atoms and space, or the 'full and the void.' All apparent differences of objects are due to the shape of the atoms composing them; *e.g.*, the atoms of water are round and smooth and loosely grouped, those of iron are jagged and uneven. The soul of man he held to be only a body within the body made of the most delicate atoms. To explain the movement of atoms and their coming into the forms we see in Nature, he affirmed that all is due to law and necessity. Things come to be what they are because they must. These atoms began by falling through infinite space, and being of different shapes and sizes, jostled one another, and so whirling about, formed vortices, and thence worlds, in infinite number, and furthermore sea and land, plants, animals, and men.

It is interesting to observe in passing that about the same time as Democritus founded the atomic school of Materialism, another system of thought, destined to fight against it for ages, was originated by Anaxagoras. From the orderly arrangement of Nature, and from the constitution of man, he inferred the existence of an all-designing Mind or Reason. This was the historic

germ of the so-called 'Argument from Design.' It is a very simple train of reasoning, and one which must have prevailed from the time when man first gazed on Nature with an inquiring mind, although false and absurd notions of finite deities hindered men from pursuing a path which many now deem too obvious to be overlooked. Thales and his school were needed to clear men's minds of superstition before reason was able to tread a path more childlike ages had found easy. So negative criticism of popular opinions has often done good service to the human mind and to the cause of religious faith. Thales seemed to sweep away religion for thoughtful Greeks, but he only cleared away thickets of fable from the slopes of Mount Olympus. Anaxagoras went up and saw in the mount an infinite intelligence as God. To him men like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle gave heed, and through all generations his argument has done battle with Materialistic creeds, and is confessed by men like J. S. Mill to be the strongest plea for the existence of God which man's intellect can frame or understand. Concerning its author, the dictum of Aristotle is well worth quoting: 'Whoever affirmed mind, as in animals, so also in Nature, to be the cause of the system of the world, and of the entire harmony of it, the same appeared like a man in his sober senses in comparison with the vain theorists of the earlier ages.'*

After Democritus there arose the Sophists, a class of professional teachers called into existence by the wealth and mental activity of the age of Pericles. They taught the arts of success in life in a Materialistic

* 'Metaphysics,' Book I., chap. iii.

sense, and insisted that true and false, good and evil, have no existence except by convention. They were extreme agnostics, denying man's power to know anything but his own sensations, and counselling their pupils to let the atoms of Democritus and the Universal Reason of Anaxagoras alone.

Against them Socrates expended the splendid energies of his mind. He followed Anaxagoras in affirming that thought underlies sense, and that the soul is more than the body, and will survive its dissolution. He insisted that man has a moral nature and a conscience. That God is Eternal Mind and Justice, and Ruler over all. There is a truth and a goodness for men to seek and find. His disciple Plato and Aristotle followed, each taking a different line of thought, but both opposing with all their might the spread of Materialistic Atheism. Their systems were great achievements, and deserve the homage and gratitude of mankind. But they were mixed up with many unavoidable errors in physics, and lacked adaptation to ordinary men. In spite of their endeavours, Greek thought became increasingly Materialistic, and before Christ came into the world the atomic theory, revived by Epicurus, and preached by Lucretius, had become the prevalent opinion. Pilate's hopeless question, 'What is Truth?' is a type of the mental attitude which prevailed among most cultivated men in his day.

Epicurus wrought out the practical inferences from the Materialistic theory in an attractive shape. He taught that pleasure is the great end of life, and that wisdom lies in discovering and carrying out that scheme of conduct which will conduce to the greatest

amount of pleasure for the longest time. The pursuit of truth he deemed an idle waste of energy. The theory of Democritus chiefly commended itself to him because, with certain modifications, it left man freest to please himself without disturbing fears of the gods. His great distinction is, that he gave his name to a system of life and thought as diametrically opposed to that symbolised by the cross as the wit of man could devise.

The chief prophet and poet of Materialism was the Roman Lucretius. He possessed a marvellous power of clear statement, and his poem on 'The Nature of Things' is a most beautiful specimen of abstruse reasoning clothed in a literary form. He was not, strictly speaking, the author of the theories he propounded and adorned, but they may be best discussed in connection with his work, and may for brevity be spoken of as his.

The chief aim which Lucretius set before himself was not the scientific elucidation of truth for its own sake, but the emancipation of mankind from the tyranny of all painful and perturbing ideas. He saw that the religious beliefs of his countrymen were a source of neither solace nor courage, but rather of cowardly fears. The gods of Greece and Rome did not deter their worshippers from crime, yet filled them with gloomy anticipations of future torment. Whether he believed there really were such beings is doubtful. He apostrophized them freely in his poem, but this may have been simply for embellishment or as a concession to popular superstitions. Whether superhuman beings existed or not, he affirmed and laboured to prove that they neither

produced the system of nature nor could destroy it, and that after death man would simply be dissolved into the atoms of which he was composed. Death, he reasoned, need have no dreadfulness to those who, when life fails, will simply cease to be, or, as a modern Lucretian puts it, will have melted, 'like streaks of morning cloud,' 'into the infinite azure of the past.'

The first principles of Lucretius are these: 'That nothing is ever divinely generated from nothing.' 'Nature resolves each thing into its own constituent elements, and does not reduce anything to nothing.' 'Nature carries on her operations by imperceptible particles.' 'These bodies which completely fill space can neither be broken in pieces . . . nor again can be decomposed.' 'The primary atoms are solid and without void. They must of necessity be eternal.' 'There is space intangible, empty, and vacant. If this were not the case, things could by no means be moved, for that which is the quality of body, viz., to obstruct and to oppose, would be present at all times, and would be exerted against all bodies.' 'This space is unbounded by extremities.' 'No third nature, therefore, distinct in itself, besides vacant space, can possibly be left undiscovered in the sum of things; no third kind of being which can at any time fall under the notice of the senses, or which anyone can find out by the exercise of his reason.' 'Whatsoever other things are said to be, you will find them to be either necessary adjuncts of these two things or accidents of them.'*

So far as these principles go they are maintained

* Lucretius 'On the Nature of Things,' Book I.

substantially by modern writers, who state the evolution theory in a Materialistic form. They affirm these atoms to exist, and discern in them 'the promise and potency of all terrestrial life.' Professor Tyndall quotes with approbation the words of Lucretius: 'Nature is seen to do all things spontaneously of herself without the meddling of the gods.'* This opinion will have to bear closer criticism later on; but it must be remarked here that the existence of these atoms was only inferred by Lucretius, and they still remain outside the range of verified knowledge. They are the objects of faith to the Materialist, for no man ever saw one. Sir W. Thomson holds, in opposition to the atomic theory, that the primary substance is a perfect fluid, which fills all space without any void being left. He thinks that atoms are only the rotating portions of this fluid; and this theory is sustained by some of the most exquisite mathematical calculations and experiments in what is called vortex motion. I offer no opinion on the merits of these rival theories. A few generations hence, perhaps, the question will be settled. Meanwhile, let us remember that the atomic theory is theory only and not scientific knowledge. The Materialist can no more show us an atom or a primary fluid than the Theist can show us God. No man by his senses can perceive the one or the other. All he can rightly say of either is 'I believe.' The most dogmatic creeds produced by Christendom are not so presumptuous as to say, 'I know.' It were well if all professors of science were as diffident, when their teachings are carried beyond the limits of demonstration.

* 'Belfast Address,' p. 55.

Assuming the existence of atoms strewn over infinite space, Lucretius had still to show how they came together, to make a beginning of organized nature. Here he encountered the tremendous problem of accounting for motion without a mover. He knew of motion caused by one body striking on another; but this left unanswered the question, 'What caused the body to move?' Space could not do it, and he had denied the existence of anything but void space and atoms; therefore he had to boldly say it was the property of atoms to move. He knew the law of gravitation in a loose kind of way—*i.e.*, he knew that all bodies fall by their own weight until sustained by something solid. Therefore, like Democritus, he pictured the earliest state of things as a sort of infinite cataract of atoms falling in infinite space. The absurdity of this from a modern point of view need scarcely be stated. There is of course no up and no down in space. 'Up' to us simply means away from our earthly centre of gravity, and 'down' the reverse. The only lines of up and down therefore with which we are acquainted are not parallel lines, as Lucretius supposed, but the radii of a circle running outwards in every possible direction into space. Lucretius, however, although unsuccessful, exhibits much ingenuity in trying to get his atoms into motion and collision. Democritus had said that, falling through a vacuum in a straight line, the larger atoms went faster than the small, and so collided, and went whirling round and round until they mingled and formed worlds. But Aristotle, with all his errors in physics, was able to point out that in a perfect vacuum, which of course

offers no resistance, large and small bodies would fall at the same rate, and so would never touch. Lucretius admitted this; 'but,' said he, 'the atoms do not fall in perfectly straight lines.' To meet the criticism of those who said, 'This is contrary to observation,' he frankly admitted that it was so, as far as heavy and visible bodies are concerned, but denied that it was of necessity true of bodies so small as to be imperceptible. 'You may yourself see,' he observed, 'that heavy bodies never turn aside without being turned.' 'But who is there,' he inquired, 'that can see that atoms do not at all turn themselves aside, even in the least, from the straight direction of their course?'*

This was the only escape he could devise. He first invented an unreasonable idea, and then treated it as fact. This notion, that atoms behave themselves when out of human sight in a way which large bodies would be ashamed to imitate when under observation, should be very amusing to professors of the exact sciences. But Lucretius is a warning in this, that assertions of 'what is,' and what 'must be,' in regions that transcend experience, are very dangerous things for Materialists to indulge in, even in our day. It may indeed be well for all of us to remember that while we have ancestors whose random theories and rash assumptions we criticise, with now and then a little mirth, we shall also, should the present order of nature continue a little longer, have a posterity who in their turn will criticise us.

Another point of great interest and suggestiveness in the Lucretian theory of motion demands a passing

* 'Lucretius,' Book II.

notice. Materialists to-day are all Necessitarians. They are bound to deny free-will in man, because they say that all his passions and thoughts are mere effects of organized substance. The late W. K. Clifford said, 'A moving molecule of inorganic matter possesses a small piece of mind stuff.' This is, of course, a mere truism, from a Materialistic point of view, and hence it follows by inexorable logic that you cannot have free volition in man unless there be volition in the stuff of which his mind is made. Lucretius was well aware of this, and stated it as plainly as the English Professor. But he did a fine stroke of business for his theory by reversing the process pursued by so many of his modern disciples. They say, in substance, 'There is no free-will in atoms; therefore there is none in organized matter; and as man is only organized matter, there is no free-will in man.' But Lucretius said there is liberty of action in man, 'by means of which we go whereso-ever inclination leads each of us.' 'Wherefore,' said he, 'you must necessarily confess that the same is the case in the seeds of matter . . . since we see that nothing can be produced from nothing.' To most impartial judges it will appear, that if either process be more valid than the other, that of Lucretius is to be preferred. He at any rate began by admitting the best known facts in the universe, viz., those of our own consciousness, and thence reasoned up to the properties of things beyond observation. Modern Materialists begin with things we do not know, and thence proceed to deny our knowledge of ourselves. It is also instructive to observe that, unlike many moderns, he saw and stated in this connection the absurdity of sup-

posing that cause could follow cause in infinite succession.

It would far exceed the limits of this discussion to describe the manner in which Lucretius traced out the development of the present system of nature from his free-will atoms. His book is well worth reading, as a work of the imagination, and also as containing something more than the germ of modern physical theories. In his observations upon the fear of death there are thoughts which no man need be ashamed to ponder, and by which many who have a little faith might be rebuked. It is impossible for any generous heart not to feel a strong measure of sympathy with this bold, clear thinker, who followed the light of reason wherever its pale taper led. It is only just to remember the debasing and fear-gendering superstitions which prevailed over the Roman world in his day; how glimmering and uncertain was the light shed on the Being of God by such men as Socrates and Plato; and the repulsiveness and arrogance of spirit which characterized the Jewish people, who alone inherited the sublime creed of Abraham. No one who considers the surroundings and opportunities of Lucretius will judge him as if he had rejected such light as now shines from the teachings of Christianity. Lucretius had never heard the words which tell of God as a Spirit and the Father of our spirits, when he declared that atoms and void space are the only things which exist. If, therefore, as Paul, standing on Mars Hill, declared, God overlooked the idolatry which men practised in 'times of ignorance,' He could not be less merciful to one who despised

idolatry, yet found not Him 'in whom we live and move and have our being.'

For centuries the atomic theory passed out of sight. The conflict between pagan superstition and pagan scepticism gave place to a mightier battle, in which Christianity assailed and grappled with them both. Christian thinkers were able to ally their beliefs with the idealism of Plato, and afterwards to employ the logical method of Aristotle; but Materialism and Christianity could not live together for an hour. Through the middle ages there was but little fruitful thinking. Philosophy and religion alike sank very low. The dominant Church, departing from the spirit and maxims of its founders, overlaid the ancient simplicity of apostolic teachings and practice with semi-pagan customs and immoralities. The very Popes and Cardinals became undisguised infidels, and a practical Materialism of the basest sort prevailed. The revolt of the nations from Rome released the minds and tongues of many, and unbelief as well as faith became articulate. Still, the atomic theory of Lucretius found no revival until the days of Gassendi and Hobbes, and by them it was only held in a very modified fashion. To call Hobbes a Materialist would be unfair, but his writings unquestionably provided a philosophic weapon for the hands of many who went beyond him afterwards. On the eve of the French Revolution Materialism burst into power. Voltaire and Rousseau were not, as is vulgarly supposed, Materialists; but others whose names need not detain us proclaimed, 'There is no God in heaven, no soul in man's body, no future existence.' Strange to say, while shrieking 'Liberty'

as the first word of their revolutionary cry, these red philosophers declared, 'There is no free-will.' All readers of history know what terrible licentiousness revelled under the name of Liberty, while defying judgment under the plea of Necessity; what envy and covetousness brought derision on the demand for Equality, and what fiendish brutality mocked the assertion of Fraternity. To complete the paradox, it only needed that Madness should crown itself as Wisdom, and this, through the inspiration of Materialism, was also done in the face of mankind. Vile women, flushed with wine and passion, sat enthroned in the churches of France to receive worship as the true symbols of the goddess Reason, *vice* the God of Christianity deposed. Under the reign of such a deity, the worshippers became like unto the object of their devotion, and all the sanctities of home and family were set at nought.

The chief effect of these excesses was to produce a shuddering recoil from Materialistic principles, and they found little philosophic expression in the generation which ensued. But within the last half-century advocates have sprung up throughout Europe who have succeeded in forcing their views into a front place. H. G. Atkinson and his distinguished disciple, Harriet Martineau, led the van of modern English Materialism; and in their writings the system is boldly enunciated, and its theological and ethical issues are fearlessly discussed. Historically, it would be proper to consider their doctrines in this place; but it will be preferable to postpone their notice, because the fundamental principles they espoused cannot be satisfactorily discussed apart from more recent speculations, and

also because it is advisable to keep the moral tendencies of Materialism separate from its abstract truth or falsity. We have now, therefore, to consider the manner in which contemporary writers endeavour to supply the defects and to rectify the errors which were confessedly fatal to the atomic theory as propounded by Lucretius.

We have seen how his idea of atoms falling through space, whether in a straight or slanting direction, appears absurd in the light of modern physics. No scientific mind can endure the notion of invisible particles behaving in a way which would be unlawful for those that are visible. Neither can a sober philosopher impute free-will to these atoms, while regarding them as the materials of the universe, in which law reigns without variableness. How, then, are we now invited to regard these atoms as coming together and combining to form the things we see?

Allowing the existence of atoms to be assumed for the sake of argument, and also that they are the ultimate forms of matter, it will be found that the newest theory of motion amongst them involves quite as much absurdity as that of Democritus or of Lucretius. The law of gravitation, which upsets these ancient assertions, is now relied upon to explain the mystery in another fashion. This law, as now established, is, 'that every body attracts every other body with a force proportional to their masses conjointly, and to the square of their distances inversely.' Every atom, therefore, it is reasoned, must be regarded as a centre of gravity; hence atoms would come together of themselves.

This is, no doubt, as obvious to some minds as the free volitional action of atoms was to Lucretius, but it is scarcely more satisfactory. If the atoms were originally of equal size and equally distributed through space, they would be equally attracted on every side, and so would remain still for ever unless moved by some external force. But the theory before us finds force only in the atoms, and therefore has no external source of motion to suggest. Shall we be asked to believe, then, that these atoms are of different sizes, or unequally distributed in space? If so, we require to be informed how these phenomena were produced. If matter be a single substance, as the theory itself insists, its divisibility must be uniform; and if these atoms are, as alleged, the smallest pieces into which matter can be divided, they must all be of the same size. If it could be proved that they vary in size and shape, it would be evidence that they are, as J. C. Maxwell said, 'manufactured articles,' and the atomic theory is gone. The only remaining hypothesis is that, being equal in size, they were never equally distributed. But then we inquire, what caused the inequality? Clearly not the force of gravity, for that could only get to work among equal masses as the result of their unequal distances, and cannot be thought of as the cause of its own antecedent conditions. Therefore, according to the modern theory, we are still asked to believe that invisible atoms conduct themselves when out of human sight in a manner of which no visible body is capable; or else we must accept the absurdity, from which even Lucretius shrank, of an infinite succession of finite causes, cause following cause for ever.

These considerations alone, when duly apprehended, are absolutely fatal to the atomic theory as an attempt to account for the universe. But for the sake of clearness it may be desirable to present the same thought in a different form.

Recent discussions have necessitated a distinction between Force and Energy.* The two terms may appear to many quite synonymous. There are, however, two distinct ideas which need naming apart, and these terms are now devoted to this purpose in scientific terminology. Energy signifies the power of doing work, in whatever that power may consist. Force is strictly only a name for the rate at which some agent possessed of energy does work. It is, as Professor Tait puts it, no more a real entity than the bank rate of interest is actual money. If bodies move towards one another, it is because some energy is at work to set them moving, and force is the rate at which they work. The question we are considering, then, must be put anew in this form: 'What is the energy which moves all bodies in the manner stated by the law of gravity?' Is it resident in the atoms, or is it external to them? If it be not in them, the Materialist

* For a lucid exposition of the subject the reader is advised to consult Professor Tait's 'Recent Advances in Physical Science,' p. 338. Mr. Herbert Spencer, whose use of the word 'Force' Professor Tait criticises, has commented on the criticism in an appendix to the fourth edition of his 'First Principles,' but he has not answered the argument. Mr. Spencer will also be quoted to show that, whether we agree with him or with Professor Tait, we are inevitably brought to the same conclusion, viz., that the energy or force known to us in nature is not the power which originates motion or which can be thought of as persistent.

has nowhere else to look, for it cannot be in empty space. If it be in them, it must be either actual (kinetic) or potential, and in order to answer our question we must remember the difference between these two things. Potential energy, as its name denotes, never originates motion in any body. There is potential energy in a stone carried up to the top of a house and laid on the edge of the roof. But that stone will never stir unless moved. Push it over, and its potential energy will become actual, and in falling down it will have a force which can be measured by mathematical instruments to a nicety, and may be roughly estimated by any passer-by on whose head it falls. Potential energy is not the property of any body as such, but is always due to some position in which it has been placed by work done. The only difference between a stone on a housetop which possesses potential energy, and a stone on the pavement which does not, is due to its position, and that position is due to the antecedent fact that you have expended energy by carrying it up against gravity, and that work is not lost, but is stored up for future use. A push given to a stone on the pavement moves it a few inches, and with scarcely any force. A similar push administered to the same stone when carried up to the roof will send it down with immense force to do good or evil work below. Clearly, then, potential energy never originated motion, and can never exist except as the result of previous movement. If, therefore, any energy be possessed by atoms as such, it must be actual energy. But here, again, physical science declares the thing impossible. Such a thing as actual energy apart from

some previous work done is unknown and unthinkable. The first law of motion is that 'Every body continues in its state of rest or of uniform motion in a straight line, except in so far as it is compelled by forces to change that state;' *i.e.*, no visible body moves without being moved. Matter cannot start itself, nor, if started, can it stop itself, or turn itself aside. Clearly, then, energy is not a property of matter as such, and cannot be attributed to the primal atoms without an error as gross as that of the ancient speculators. To say that atoms originally came together because they are centres of gravity is still to say that they behaved in far-off eternities as matter never does when the monitorial eye of science is upon its movements. The future poet of this theory will, however, have a fine field for his imagination, and will be able to clothe the hard doctrine with romantic beauty by tracing the paternity of all that is to the illicit love of two attractive atoms which unlawfully came together. From this secret sin of unwatched and ungovernable mites the world, with all its marvels of order and all its joys and sorrows, has proceeded. This was the true origin of evil, and because matter is eternal there must be hidden somewhere in the universe the first guilty pair, and as every atom must possess a portion of 'mind-stuff,' it is to be hoped they have long since repented of their transgression! Probably every devout Pessimist will pray that when this feverish concourse and commotion they have caused has sunk to rest, they may 'never do so again.'

This may justly be called nonsense, but it is none the less a fair mythical presentation of the current theory of Materialism. It is a theory which, though seriously

propounded by men of scientific professions, makes a jest of gravity, and is well fitted in another sense to disturb the gravity of the world. The energy known to science never could have originated motion; and if the present laws of nature continue, all the energy that is now active must of necessity sink down into a potential state, and so the entire universe of matter fall into a state of everlasting rest. Should it ever so come to pass, all the energy which will remain in store will be powerless to arouse itself and do any work. There is, therefore, no way of accounting for a first motion, and no hope of perpetuity for the existing order of nature, apart from a self-sufficient and originative Power, undiscoverable by physical methods, but which, whether Knowable or Unknowable by other means, is a necessity of thought.

Whatever errors Mr. Herbert Spencer may have fallen into, whether in the judgment of science or theology, he has clearly seen and proclaimed this fact; nor can this stage of our argument be more fitly concluded than in his words: 'The force of which we assert persistence is that Absolute Force of which we are indefinitely conscious as the necessary correlate of the force we know. By the Persistence of Force, we really mean the persistence of some Cause which transcends our knowledge and conception. In asserting it, we assert an Unconditioned Reality, without beginning or end.'* 'The consciousness of an Inscrutable Power manifested to us through all phenomena has been growing ever clearer, and must eventually be freed from its imperfections. The certainty that on the one hand such a

* 'First Principles,' p. 192 *d* (fourth edition).

Power exists, while on the other hand its nature transcends intuition and is beyond imagination, is the certainty towards which all intelligence has from the first been progressing. To this conclusion Science inevitably arrives as it reaches its confines; while to this conclusion Religion is irresistibly driven by criticism. And, satisfying as it does the demands of the most rigorous logic, at the same time that it gives the religious sentiment the widest possible sphere of action, it is the conclusion we are bound to accept without reserve or qualification.'*

It need scarcely be explained that this passage may be cordially approved without accepting Mr. Spencer's views concerning the 'Great Unknowable.' In so far as these are of a negative character and preclusive of all hope of intercourse between the First Cause and man, it will be necessary elsewhere to subject them to criticism. Our argument at present simply goes to show that Materialism breaks down utterly as an attempt to explain the existing order of nature. Here, then, the whole subject might be dismissed, for if a theory is unable to account for molecular motion, it can account for nothing in this moving universe of things. When it falls back on some mysterious but eternal Power which Science cannot know, yet knows must be, Materialism is gone, and the field is clear for Philosophy and Religion to consider what may be known or reasonably believed of this Power, and what our attitude of mind should be in the presence of this Infinite Reality. It will, however, be desirable to consider here what

* 'First Principles,' p. 108.

Materialism has to tell us concerning Life, and finally to add a few words about its relation to Morality.

It is impossible to discuss the origin of Life without dealing with the often battered words of Professors Tyndall and Huxley. Neither of these gentlemen is a professed Materialist, and it would be wrong to fasten upon them any name or opinions they repudiate. It would be idle, however, to ignore the fact that they have stated the Materialistic argument more powerfully and popularly than any other writers of our time. They are nevertheless entitled to receive fullest credit for the reservations they have made. It does not appear either wise or generous to pin them to conclusions which plainly are not satisfactory to their own minds. The next few paragraphs are not written to controvert any of their statements or arguments. On the contrary, we need ask no more convincing witnesses that matter, as at present known to science (if indeed it be known), does not contain life in itself, nor even 'the promise and potency of life.'

When Professor Tyndall said at Belfast that he discerned in matter such 'promise and potency,' he expressly declared that this was not a scientific perception. In the same sentence he candidly avowed that in order to discern this wondrous virtue in matter, he is compelled to 'cross the boundary of experimental evidence.' His next paragraph opens thus: 'If you ask me whether there exists the least evidence to prove that any form of life can be developed out of matter without demonstrable antecedent life, my reply is, that evidence considered perfectly conclusive by many has been adduced.' But then he proceeds to indicate that in spite

of a strong desire to find a confirmation of his speculative belief, he, in common with other scientific observers, rejects this evidence as 'vitiated by error.' His final answer to the question quoted above is that these inquirers after truth, himself included, do 'frankly admit their inability to point to any satisfactory experimental proof that life can be developed save from demonstrable antecedent life.' Professor Huxley's evidence is to the same effect. In a celebrated article, he says, 'If the hypothesis of evolution be true, living matter must have arisen from not-living matter.'* He does not conceal his wish to establish this hypothesis, and sometimes seems to speak as if it were already proved, but in the same article he confesses: 'There is not a shadow of trustworthy direct evidence that abiogenesis does take place within the period during which the existence of life on the globe is recorded.' While the prophets of physical science deliver themselves of such statements as these, the notion of life arising out of not-living matter must be regarded as a defunct theory, or more truly as a theory of life which has come into the world still-born. Science is acquainted with a time when life did not exist upon this globe, and could not possibly have existed. The period when it first appeared, lies not in a vague unknowable eternity, but within ages which can be estimated if not certainly computed; yet with the most eager desire to find the point of transition from lifelessness to life, seekers return baffled by the contradictions of nature to their hypothesis. Spontaneous generation is as

* 'Encyclo. Brit.,' ninth edition; article, 'Biology.'

much a dream as the elixir of life and the philosopher's stone.

This reference to Messrs. Huxley and Tyndall must not close without recognising the candour of the admissions quoted from their writings. It would be pleasant to think that they always wrote and spoke with the diffidence that such immeasurable gaps in their system might suggest, and many who admire their scientific expositions would gladly trace somewhat more of reluctance in their insistence on what is confessedly only a theory, and in disparagement of a faith which to millions is precious beyond price. Though not Materialists, they have probably done more than any men now living to make Materialists, and to disturb faith in Him who is a Spirit. Comparatively few observe the force of those occasional sentences which leave open their own retreat into Pantheism, if not into Theism. Fewer still read, or lay to heart, the words which have now and then exhibited their scorn of thorough-going Materialism, and at any rate, on the part of Professor Tyndall, the weary longing of his spirit for some 'Rock that is higher than' we. While expressing these regrets, and profoundly impressed as to the immense responsibility which rests on these teachers for the undermining of faith in our generation, a Christian may well feel some shame on account of the manner in which they have been treated by numerous theologians, and by many more who are not theologians, but have taken upon them to speak bitterly for God. If Christian faith be valid, the hand of One who healed the wound made by an angry disciple in the garden of Gethsemane is always busy repairing the injuries wrought by ignor-

ant zeal in His name, and a vast majority of Christians in our day would pray to have it so. How much Professor Tyndall has suffered under the treatment he has occasionally received, and yet how miserably Materialism or any other godless theory fails to appease his nature, will be seen in these words, which no right-souled man can read without respectful sympathy: 'When standing in the spring time and looking upon the sprouting foliage, the lilies of the field, and sharing the general joy of opening life, I have often asked myself whether there is no power, being, or thing, in the universe, whose knowledge of that of which I am so ignorant is greater than mine. I have said to myself, Can it be possible that man's knowledge is the greatest knowledge, that man's life is the highest life? My friends, the profession of that Atheism with which I am sometimes so lightly charged would, in my case, be an impossible answer to this question: only slightly preferable to that fierce and distorted Theism which I have lately had reason to know still reigns rampant in some minds, as the survival of a more ferocious age.'*

'In connection with the charge of Atheism, I would make one remark. Christian men are proved by their writings to have their hours of weakness and of doubt, as well as their hours of strength and conviction; and men like myself share, in their own way, these variations of mood and tense. Were the religious views of many of my assailants the only alternative ones, I do not know how strong the claims of the doctrine of

* Lecture on 'Crystals and Molecular Force,' appended to the Belfast Address, pp. 81, 82. Delivered October, 1874.

"Material Atheism" upon my allegiance might be. Probably they would be very strong. But as it is, I have noticed during years of self-observation that it is not in hours of clearness and vigour that this doctrine commends itself to my mind; that in the hours of stronger and healthier thought it ever dissolves and disappears, as offering no solution of the mystery in which we dwell and of which we form a part.'*

In the historical review of Materialism, the immoral tendencies of the system were of necessity alluded to; but in discussing the theory these tendencies have not been relied upon to prove it false. There are many who would rather trust the dictates of their moral nature than the conclusions of their reason, and a great deal might be said in their favour. It has seemed preferable to keep the abstract question, as far as possible, separate from practical tendencies; but it must not be overlooked that the theory which on purely evidential grounds has been found baseless, would, if established, provide no basis for any sort of morality. This has often been strenuously denied, but it has also been sorrowfully admitted by some of its advocates, and scornfully exulted in by others. That there may be and are Materialists of exemplary character may be cheerfully admitted. But it would be dangerous work for them to challenge attention as representatives of their theory. The moral tastes and habits of men are governed far more by the quality of their early training than by the theories—especially scientific theories—adopted in later life. Those, moreover, who live in a

* 'Belfast Address,' Preface to fifth thousand, p. 36.

social atmosphere, and under pressure of opinions, formed by centuries of Christian influence, are not to be regarded as samples of the manhood Materialism would produce if it prevailed in a nation for two or three generations. When an Englishman migrates to a sultry and insalubrious climate, he carries with him an amount of physical energy which surprises the natives. But, staying there and rearing up a family, he has the pain of seeing his children conforming to the native type, and a third generation will have but little to boast of in the way of British vigour. It will be wiser, then, and more satisfactory to all parties, to leave personal characters undiscussed, except where history may permit a fair induction of facts.

What have Materialists who have spoken out most plainly said upon the question of morality? H. G. Atkinson wrote: 'Knowledge . . sees good in evil and the working of general laws for the general good, and sees no more sin in a crooked disposition than in a crooked stick in the water; or in a hump back or a squint.'* Harriet Martineau, who accepted all Atkinson's teachings, observed: 'When we have finally dismissed all notion of subjection to a superior lawless Will, all the perplexing notions of sin and responsibility . . . . the relief is like that of coming out of a cave full of painted shadows under the free sky, with the earth open round about us to the horizon' (p. 219).

These are not isolated personal opinions, unconnected with a Materialistic theory of nature, but are

* 'Letters on the Laws of Man's Nature and Development.' By H. G. Atkinson and H. Martineau, p. 141.

the irresistible conclusions to which it conducts. That theory affirms, in Atkinson's words, 'that instinct, passion, thought, are effects of organized substance' (p. 6). 'Mind is the consequence of the material man, its existence depending on the action of the brain' (p. 16). 'For every effect there is a sufficient cause: and all causes are material causes influenced by surrounding circumstances; which is nothing more than matter being influenced by matter.' 'Some men are wolves by their nature and some are lambs; and it is vain to talk of responsibility' (p. 131). 'I am as completely the result of my nature, and impelled to do what I do, as the needle to point to the north, or the puppet to move according as the string is pulled' (p. 132). 'No man can make himself what he is not any more than an eel could become a horse, or Lord Brougham turn into a grasshopper' (p. 133). Obviously, then, both stick and temper become crooked by the unavoidable action of molecular changes. Why, then, should the temper be blamed and the stick not? What moral quality is there in either? There is no Materialist, however delicate in virtue and upright in life, who can evade the inexorable logic of this argument, as stated without compunction by Voght: 'It is indeed true, free-will does not exist, neither does any amenability or responsibility, such as morals and penal justice, and heaven knows what else, would impose upon us. At no moment are we our own masters, any more than we can decree as to the secretions of our kidneys. The organism cannot govern itself; it is governed by the law of its material combination. It is impossible to demonstrate the admissibility of punish-

ment, or to prove that there is any such thing as amenability or responsibility.' It needs no argument to show that a system of thought, which logically issues in such conclusions, is fatal to all ethics, and must in the long run prove fatal to civil government as well as to private virtue. There is no room for the word 'ought' in a Materialist's vocabulary. Our moral scruples are to him an illusion from which it is the path of peace and pleasantness to hasten his escape. Authority, divine or human, becomes the most hateful anomaly in his eyes. 'Hatred of God is the beginning of wisdom,' affirmed one. 'Our enemy is God,' shrieked another. If any Materialist draws back with loathing from these revolting utterances, he is no doubt a better man, but at the same time he is a worse logician. Happily there are inconsistent Materialists, as unhappily there are inconsistent Christians; but the moral value of the two systems may be summed up in a single sentence: The more inconsistent a Materialist is, the better he becomes as a man, a citizen, and a friend; but the more inconsistent a Christian is, the worse he becomes as a man, and in all the relationships of life.

Such considerations as these are of no mean value. They are a sort of *reductio ad horrendum*, warning us to think carefully and examine well every premise and every term of the syllogism. At the same time, they would not suffice to alter a single demonstrated fact, or to invalidate a fully verified conclusion. If all that we hold dear in virtue, and beautiful in holiness, be without any basis in reason, and if there be no such thing as moral obligation, then we must let our fair ideals go, or at any rate hold them merely as preferential thoughts.

There is, however, no occasion for this sacrifice of all that renders life worth living. Materialism fails to account for the facts of either motion or life, and the world may await with calmness the supply of these fundamental defects. Should they ever be supplied, there are many things to be said which the present limits of knowledge render superfluous. Many earnest thinkers anticipate an eventual formation of a complete and unbroken theory of Evolution. When that happens, it needs no prophet to predict that it will not be stated, or utterable in the terms of matter, nor exclude the operations of the Divine or the human will.

With such facts and arguments and admissions before our minds, it would be idle to discuss the higher stages of evolution as if the truth of Materialism depended upon them. Against the theory of evolution as representing an order of progress, no Christian need have a word to utter; but on the other hand, as a theory of origins, it has not a word to say for itself. It cannot account for motion, and it cannot account for life, and it cannot tell you what is the real substance or the primary form of matter, or even prove against an Idealist that matter itself exists. Materialism as an explanation of the universe is like a theory of architecture which can tell you everything about a house except who built it, what it is made of, and whether the whole structure may not be a phantom of your own brain. In exposing the emptiness of such a theory, it may appear to some that very little has been accomplished. In truth, however, a clear and definite conviction that physical science has not explained, and cannot hope to explain, the universe, is just what

thousands of educated and uneducated people in our day lack. There is an undefined notion, widely spread, that a Great First Cause is a sort of extra belief which science is able to dispense with. Hearts which throb in sympathy with the prayers and songs of ancient Prophets and Apostles are tortured by insinuations which are freely made that they are clinging for comfort's sake to a faith which has no foundation in reason, and is not in harmony with the verified knowledge of our age. Let them once see that the intellect as well as the heart demands, as Mr. Herbert Spencer says, a 'Cause which transcends our knowledge,' and that in this ultimate truth 'Religion and Science coalesce,' and then, released from the haunting dread of being 'too superstitious,' they will entertain whatever beliefs may appear most reasonable concerning the nature, character, and manward relations of this Great Power. It is not assumed because Materialism fails to establish its fundamental propositions that therefore the Christian ideas of God are entitled to our credence. The position regarded as established in this chapter is, that the contradictions of Materialism are not founded on a knowledge of facts incompatible with the first principles of Christianity. All that we know of the material universe is consistent with the statement, 'By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which do appear;' and also with the teaching of Christ, that He who made the heavens and the earth is the Father of a spiritual nature in man, and has been pleased to afford us some knowledge of Himself.

## CHAPTER II.

### PANTHEISM.

PANTHEISM, as the word itself imports, is a theory of the universe which regards the whole of it as God. We look out upon an innumerable multitude of objects, celestial and terrestrial, which appear to be undergoing a ceaseless process of movement and change; but behind all differences and alterations our minds inquire after some wondrous unity. Our thoughts cannot rest in the many. The Materialist says 'All these phenomena are the outcome of one substance called Matter,' and searches after unity by reducing the universe to an infinite number of atoms. The Pantheist says, 'All these phenomena are simply aspects or modifications of one substance, which is God. God is the Infinite All, and outside the all nothing can be; therefore, all that is is God.' Some Pantheists say matter does not exist except as an idea of our minds. Others say the material universe is God's body — the Infinite Soul dwells in the visible system of Nature as man's soul dwells in his body. A very fascinating notion this, and one of which many are rather enamoured who have never looked critically into the philosophy of Pantheism. They suppose it to mean that God is a conscious, thinking, and controlling Spirit, superior to all things,

and impelling and guiding them by His power. But this is not what the Pantheist means. His cardinal doctrine is that God has no existence except in the system of Nature, and therefore He is not conscious, except and in so far as we and other conscious beings are parts of God. The analogy of soul and body, then, which some Pantheists employ, must not delude us into a false definition of our subject. Whether matter be admitted or denied, Pantheism asserts that everything and all things are God, and God has no existence above or independent of what a Christian calls the creation. Isaiah places in the mouth of the Creator of the heaven and earth the words, 'I am the Lord, and there is none else; there is no God beside Me. . . .' But Pantheism makes the universe say, 'I am God, and there is nothing else beside me.'

This fundamental position needs to be carefully remembered, for without it there can be no clear thought on the subject. It is one of the most marked features of popular Pantheistic literature that it freely ascribes the qualities we associate with personality to what it calls God. It speaks of the All as full of love, wisdom, goodness, and other attributes of conscious beings. But let no one be deceived. This is not Pantheism in its philosophic mantle, talking to students in the porch; it is Pantheism with a shepherd's reed and a garland of laurels, reclining in green pastures and pouring out the poetry of its feelings untrammelled by critical severities of speech.

Adopting, as with Materialism, the historic method, we may wisely gather our knowledge of the theory, and form our estimate of its value, by reviewing its

various expressions and results through the course of ages.

Until recent years the Hindoos were looked down upon by Europe as a race of senseless idolaters. It is now well known that the gross idolatry which prevails throughout India is in some way connected with subtle and most ancient systems of philosophy, and with an extensive literature in languages long since passed out of use. Our knowledge of this literature is chiefly due to the labours of Christian scholars, though partly to a revived interest in their own sacred books which the invasion of a new religion has stirred up among natives of the learned caste. This knowledge, however, is still very imperfect, and in dealing with Indian religious thought, the inquirer has continually to deplore the lack of clear historic and biographic details such as are available in the study of Grecian philosophy.

It is believed by many that a pure Monotheism was the primitive creed of India. Without expressing an opinion on that point, we may start our review with the religious condition exhibited in some of the older Vedic hymns. This appears to be a very simple worship of natural objects, such as the bright sky, the sun and stars, the dawn of day, clouds, rivers, trees, and indeed all the varied forms of external nature. These objects became gradually associated in poetry and popular belief with personalities mystically connected with them, just as the same process can be traced in Greece and even among the Hebrews. This veneration easily led to image-worship, and as the feeling of awe is in human nature always blended with feelings of guilt and fear, sacrificial rites and cruel

customs inevitably arose. Polytheism, the worship of 'the many' as gods, never did and never could satisfy earnest and profound thinkers. Such men incessantly asked, 'How came these many gods into being?' 'What relation do they bear to one another, and to the world, past, present, and future?'

Groping for a common cause and a bond of unity, these early thinkers conceived that behind the many gods there must be One, and by abstract reasonings they concluded that this One Being must be the substance of all that is. Then came this metaphysical puzzle: If an Infinite Being exists, how can anything else exist? 'Something else' means something *more*, but there cannot be more than what is infinite; ergo, there is only *One Being*. We cannot be surprised at this confusion of mind, for similar feats of reasoning have been common, and are not unknown in modern England. The puzzle is really a verbal one. There may be many infinities of various kinds, none displacing the others. Infinite time may co-exist with infinite space. Mind, as conceived by most English thinkers, does not displace matter in space. Infinite love does not exclude infinite wisdom, nor does power exclude goodness. Again, infinite substance may have many attributes, and possess them without limitation of degree. Those attributes may surely include power to create worlds, which, because created, are not necessary or self-existent, and might pass away and leave their maker undiminished. Those attributes may also include power to call into existence many conscious beings capable of education and discipline. In fact, to say there is an Infinite Being, but to deny it these

powers, is to utter a contradiction; it is to imagine what is finite and call it infinite. Having the sublime Biblical idea of God in mind, we can probably see this without much difficulty; but these ancient Hindoo sages were unable by wisdom to find out God, and they declared with confidence, 'All that is is one,' and called this one Brahma.

But having found their Brahma, their Pan, their absolute Being, what was to be done with the many? Not a few philosophers have disposed of an external world to their own relief by declaring it only a vision of the mind, and without objective existence. But this leaves the thinker free to regard himself as real, and to say, 'I think; therefore I am.' But such half-measures did not satisfy the 'intellectual seriousness' of these Hindoos. If a single man could say, 'I am, but all outside me is ideal, a mere phantasm of my own mind,' that man must either be Brahma, or something more than Brahma. But he could not be Brahma, for perfect being can have no illusions. Therefore, either Brahma must be denied, or the thinker must deny himself. Their great difficulty lay in the fact of man's self-consciousness. Each man looked out on the universe and divided it into two parts, the 'I' and the 'not I.' This, of course, is what we all do. It is not vanity or folly which cuts up everything into two such unequal parts; it is a necessity of thought. The thinker knows himself, or thinks that he does, and views all other things and beings as objects outside. What then could be done with this stubborn difficulty of countless beings, each conscious of a separate existence? They dealt with it in a most drastic manner. The universe

was purged of all but Brahma in a sentence, 'It is all maya'—*i.e.*, illusion. Consciousness is an illusion, and it is the illusory cause of that huge illusion called the world. Brahma is not conscious of himself—does not know himself as we seem to know ourselves. Nor does he know anything outside himself, for there is nothing outside but illusion. He has no qualities, and no attributes, and can cause nothing, for nothing but Brahma is. The ripe result of Hindoo wisdom, therefore, was and is, 'No thing is but Nothing.' We are but dreams of dreaming which no real person dreams. We are nothing, and the sooner we cease to have the horrible feeling of being something the better. The sooner the illusion fades and we sink back into Brahma or the eternal peace of Nothingness, the sooner we shall escape the tormenting deceit called Life.

Then why did they not commit suicide? That is precisely what they were anxious to do. Annihilation is not to the philosophic Hindoo a penal substitute for hell; it is his heaven, and the object of all his aspiration. But then the sages of old were wise enough to confess suicide a very difficult thing. It may be easy for an illusion called a man to put an imaginary knife into his imaginary body; but what would be the good of that if it only changed the dream and he began to think himself a tiger, a serpent, or a snail? This was the philosophic view of transmigration. They believed that men had passed through countless cycles of illusory existence, and that death, except to the prepared, would only fling them into a repetition of the most horrible and prolonged experiences. It was this which gave eternal Nothingness its charm. It was

regarded as the sole escape from otherwise endless dreams of filthy and miserable animal consciousness. Only from the human stage of illusion could escape be found into repose. Suicide, therefore, to the Hindoo, took the form of subjecting self to a course of mortification and solitary meditation. To attain absorption into Brahma, the mind must withdraw itself from all interest in so-called outward things. All ordinary desires must be quenched, all seeming existences must be contemplated as vanities and lies. Thought must become concentrated upon Brahma, and then in the course of ages of ever deepening repose, consciousness of self will fade away into the perfect peace of the only true Being, which is Brahma, or absolute Nothing.

This philosophic Pantheism was the seed of Buddhism, but the soil in which the new religion took root and flourished was that of a gross Polytheism. Such a frosty creed as Brahmanism had no charm for the multitude, and never did or could become popular. The origination of Buddhism is ascribed to an Indian prince named Gotama. His life story is almost entirely mythical. The time when he lived is uncertain, the earliest date assigned for his birth being 620 B.C., and the latest for his death 400 B.C. Somewhere between these two extremes there is no sufficient reason to doubt Gotama lived and did notable work. The general belief among Buddhists now is that he was one of the highest gods, and became incarnate to teach mankind the way of peace. Monstrous legends are current concerning his birth and after career, and these vary in the different countries where the religion now

prevails. Mr. Edwin Arnold has put some of them into a pleasing English dress. His 'Light of Asia' gives the story of Buddha as adorned in the course of centuries with miraculous additions. It is also adapted to English tastes by a tincture of Christian thought and Biblical phraseology. So far as the main facts can be sifted from what is fabulous, it would appear that Gotama was reared with the utmost delicacy and care. An indulgent father surrounded him with all the luxuries the Orient could furnish, and strove to conceal from his sight the miseries of real life. In a noble and reflective nature this led to a tremendous reaction. When the woes of his fellow-creatures burst upon his unaccustomed sight, they produced a shock which is never felt in so severe a form by those who grow up from infancy in familiarity with the changes and sorrows of existence. The horror produced by the discovery of disease, old age and death led Gotama to hate life, and to curse birth as the parent of all succeeding evils. The love of wife and child became a torture when he saw the shadow of sickness and death spread over their beauty. From all his splendour and ease he fled into solitude, and there through years of terrible conflict with doubts and passions he passed into a state of serene superiority to his lower nature, and was filled with a blissful faith in the attainment of eventual peace. The course of his own experience and reflection taught him what appeared the only true rest for man, viz., Nirvana, the repose of Unconsciousness, and also the four-staged path by which that repose can be reached. Filled with confidence in himself as Buddha, the 'enlightened one,' Gotama returned to the

society of men, and devoted his days to the instruction of the people.

There has been much debate as to the precise idea represented by the word Nirvana. Some say—and their opinion seems now undeniably correct—that Nirvana differs in no important respect from the Brahma of the older creed. Others, of less authority, and with manifestly deficient data, assert that it is precisely what we understand by immortal life.

Among these latter must be mentioned Mr. Edwin Arnold, whose views of Buddhism have probably been more widely read in this country than any others. We should not criticize a poem founded on myths for not presenting strict history or exact philosophy; but unfortunately, Mr. Arnold claims in his preface to have given a true account of the Buddhist doctrine of Nirvana. He there informs us that he has a 'firm conviction that a third of mankind would never have been brought to believe in blank abstractions, or in Nothingness, as the issue and crown of Being.'* This conviction is probably shared by all who have thought upon the subject; but inasmuch as the popular Buddhism of China, Ceylon, and Thibet is not supposed by any scholar to represent the philosophic tenets of the creed, Mr. Arnold might have perceived that the acknowledged repugnance of mankind to abstractions and Nothingness affords no criterion of what Nirvana means to philosophic minds.

Professor Blackie, whose poetic fervour is so admirable, devotes several eloquent pages to the task of proving that Nirvana is the same conception as the

* 'The Light of Asia,' Preface, p. xv.

'eternal Sabbath' of a Christian's hope. 'It is in fact,' he insists, 'our *eternal life*, and nothing else;'* and then proceeds to quote a few passages from Buddhist writings to sustain his assertion. These passages are too long for citation here; but it is rather remarkable that the word Nirvana does not occur in any one of them. Buddhists believe in several stages of deepening calm and peace through which what we call the soul must pass to reach Nirvana. These intermediate stages are really the ultimate objects of desire to the multitude, and it is with them that the bulk of their religious poetry is concerned. It is idle, therefore, to quote words as illustrative of the meaning of Nirvana, without its being shown that they really refer to this finality of being. It would be about as wise to accept a description of Greenland as a scientific account of the earth at the North Pole. But in addition to this fallacy, Professor Blackie, though keenly alive to the Western error of attaching a literal significance to Oriental language, has been betrayed into this very mistake while in the act of denouncing it. He has taken such terms as 'life,' 'existence,' and 'the gate of immortality' to mean what they would mean in England, whereas they are often used by Eastern poets and sages, whether Buddhists or Hindoos, in a mystical sense, from which all notions of consciousness have been utterly eliminated. As against these views, which have been widely accepted in this country, and have led many to confess themselves charmed with the sweet 'Light of Asia,' the testimony of Mr. Rhys Davids appears to be conclusive: 'Buddhism does not

* 'The Philosophy of Atheism,' p. 148.

acknowledge the existence of a soul as a thing distinct from the parts and powers of man which are dissolved at death, and the Nirvana of Buddhism is simply extinction.'*

Gotama chiefly departed from his predecessors in India in his practical teachings respecting the right path to Nirvana, or Brahma. Many of his instructions are very beautiful, and display a profound knowledge of human nature. His morality has been represented as equal to Christ's, and his inculcation of self-sacrifice as not at all inferior. When the spirit of his doctrine is examined, however, it is found to be diametrically opposed to Christ's. The final aim, 'eternal Nothingness,' vitiated all the means to be adopted for its attainment. He said men might escape their tormenting sense of sin and dissatisfied desire, yet not as Christ teaches, by receiving a richer, fuller life, but through the extermination of all desire by a process of emotional starvation. The inspiration of his teaching, therefore, is despair, not hope. He said, Fight self; do the things you wish not to do; render to others the most repugnant and arduous services: but do it so that you may cease more speedily to retain the slightest clinging to life, so that you may most effectually stay the illusion of individual consciousness. With a warm colouring of Christian sentiment thrown over its cynical and despondent spirit, combined with a judicious suppression of all that is inconvenient, the so-called 'Light of Asia' may be made to seem as pure as 'The Light of the World.' If the one, however, be light, the other is darkness, and the morality of Buddha is as unlike the

* 'Encyclo. Brit.,' ninth edition; article, 'Buddhism.'

morality of Christ, as the Nothingness of Nirvana is unlike the joyous life of the holy cities which in Christ's teaching are the 'many mansions' of our Heavenly Father's House.

It may be well to repeat that the Buddhism here criticised is not the popular Buddhism of China and Ceylon, or of any existent people. The religion which lives under this name is not a philosophic Pantheism, but a gross Polytheism. People never want to become Nothing, or to be lost in the 'Great All,' until they have either thought themselves into a thicket of metaphysical conundrums or sinned themselves into a sense of utter and irretrievable ruin. What men long for all the world over is a better life, and Buddhism has accommodated itself to that craving. Gotama never worshipped any material idol or ideal god. The chief sight in every Buddhist temple is now an image of the great teacher himself. Chinamen and Cingalese look forward, not to extinction, but simply to escape the doom of going down again into the bestial state. Short of Nirvana, therefore, the popular creed has invented an endless host of happy gods, and the people are encouraged to believe they may ascend to their level and there abide, unless, indeed, when in that state they should change their minds, and aspire to join the elect in Nothingness. In China the religion has thriven mainly through the invention of a goddess of Mercy, who was just at the point of entering Nirvana, but drew back out of pity for men, and consented to live for their sakes. Hence its power has been not in its Pantheistic theory of existence, which denies personality, but in the presentation of tales about self-

denying and loving persons who, like the mythic Buddha, have surrendered their own blessedness to save men from sin and woe. It is an amazing witness to the fact that Pantheism is a denial of all that men have most reason to believe about themselves, and a refusal of all their natures yearn for now and hereafter. It confirms the assertion of Christianity, that the coming of a compassionate and self-sacrificing Saviour from above is man's deepest need; and Christian thinkers may cherish hopes that Gotama and many Buddhists have found that the true rest for human spirits is not in endless sleep, but in a more wakeful life, and that their passionate craving for love and redemption has found a nobler answer than the extinction of desire, even in the satisfaction of every holy aspiration, by looking upon and resembling one who is the image, not of Brahma, but Jehovah—not the No-thing which is and is not, but the great 'I AM,' the living and self-existent Cause and Maker and Redeemer of men.

Pantheism first appears in Greek speculation in the teachings of the Eleatic school, founded by Xenophanes. His great aim was to disabuse men's minds of ideas about the gods contained in the poems of Homer and Hesiod. He declared, 'There is one mightiest God among gods and men, like to mortals in neither body nor mind. Men, however, imagine,' said he, 'that the gods are born, are clothed in our garments, and endowed with our form and figure. But if oxen or lions had hands, and could paint and fashion things as men do, they too would form the

gods after their own similitude, horses making them like horses, and oxen like oxen.'

It would appear from this extract that Xenophanes was not aware how much more commonly men had shaped their gods like animals than like men. It was a hard cut at Homeric theology, and one full of wise suggestiveness for all time. As often quoted, however, and paraphrased to discredit the idea of consciousness and intelligence in the Supreme Being, it is a ludicrous self-refutation. If oxen or lions had power to paint and fashion things, and to conceive a god, they would be what now they are not; viz., thinking beings like man; and their god would then be a conscious and thinking being also, whatever they deemed his form. Xenophanes, therefore, by this sarcastic argument, fairly demolished idolatry: but at the same time he unwittingly posited conscious intelligence as the essence of the Deity under any form or apart from any fashion or similitude whatever. Having got rid, as he thought, of any sort of personality in God, he still believed in the unity and reality of the universe, and, as Aristotle beautifully says, 'looking wistfully upon the whole heaven, he affirms that unity is God.'*

Having made this the basis of all thinking, the Greek sage was caught in the same thicket as the Hindoo; for how could he account for the moving, variable, and bewildering aspect of the world as comprising many objects? Having decided that all that is is one, and that this one is permanent and unchangeable completeness of being, he had no room in his philosophy for anything else; accordingly, he was

* 'Metaphysics,' Book I., Chap. v.

driven to say that the world, as we perceive it by the senses, is unreal, and has no existence in and for itself, but only for the human mind.

Parmenides followed in the same line, and Xeno brought these ideas into complete agreement with Brahmanism in all except terminology by explicitly denying any sort of existence to the sensible world, even as relative to the mind. His word Being equals Brahma, and his 'not Being' equals 'Maya'—illusion, and specifically the illusion of supposing one's self to have any Being. About the same time lived Heraclitus. He is generally classed among the Materialists, but, as already mentioned, he appears to have regarded fire not as the primary substance but as a symbol for ceaseless motion. Heraclitus saw that the immovable Being of the Eleatics was no Being at all. It did not account for the existence of the phenomena treated as illusions, or for the existence of any finite beings to be deceived by appearances. It failed to recognise that thought is a process, and therefore involves movement and variety as well as unity. Taking warning, then, from the fatal mistake of beginning with an unchangeable whole, which eternally excludes changeable parts and changeable phenomena, he started with movement, and said, 'There is no being, nothing really is, but all things are in a ceaseless course of becoming.' Like Xenophanes and his school, he distrusted the senses, but for an opposite reason. They said: 'The senses tell us that the universe is in endless flux and change, but this is false, for Reason declares that the All is everlasting sameness.' Heraclitus said: 'The senses tell us the universe is permanent being, whereas

Reason proves that it is not, but is always in a state of transition, passing from what was to what is to be, but ceasing to be what we say it is even while we speak. It is all one, all God, eternally coming into existence, but never remaining the same.'

This may seem nonsense to some minds, but there was a marvellous force of reason and insight in this thinker, and he has been followed by Hegel, whose mysterious teachings are appropriately called a secret. To get a glimpse of what this theory of eternal Becoming means, let me ask my reader a question: 'Do you exist in the past, the present, or the future?' You say, of course, 'In the present.' But do you? The time that was still future when you began to read the above question has become past—but then you are not in the past; the end of my present sentence is in the future—and you are not in that. But no, that again is past! While you take your metaphysical razor to cleave past and future asunder they are blended together and are gone. You are, and yet you are only becoming—physically and mentally you are running out of one condition into another, but are never stationary. So it is with all things. The river is for ever running, but the waters are never the same. The trees are for ever growing, yet as ceaselessly they are changing their substance and form. The stars are never for one millionth part of a second in the same relative positions in space. Light is for ever journeying, but never pauses to be. The end of one state of being is always passing into and becoming the commencement of another. So Heraclitus escaped the inexorable logic of the Hindoo and the Eleatic sages. He had

found an 'All' and a 'One' which was also many, a unity which was also diversity; and his daring formula, 'everything is and is not,' when limited to the visible universe, is one of the truest and most useful deliverances that metaphysics ever produced. It tends to harmonize the teachings of the reason and of the senses, the observations of physical science, and the abstract conclusions of the intellect. It is, however, an inadequate theory of the universe. It describes the process of the ages, but it cries aloud for a beginning. It is an alphabet without an Alpha or an Omega, a first or a last. It is motion without a start, and without a goal, and it leaves unsolved the problem, 'Whence comes the philosophic mind which observes the ceaseless flow of the outward universe and yet retains its sense of personal identity, and its conviction of responsibility for things done in the past?' Behind the universe of change some everlasting Power is a necessity of thought, and that Power must be a very different sort of Being from the dead immovable Nothingness from which Heraclitus scornfully turned aside; very different also from the Nothing which is always tending to become something, but never attaining to absolute Being, of Heraclitus and Hegel, his modern child.

The latest and most popular form which Pantheism assumed among the Greeks was that taught by Zeno of Cyprus, the founder of the Stoical philosophy. The Stoics were very numerous, and consequently varied greatly in their views, but held that there is a great Reason or Soul of all things working in and through matter, and having no existence apart from it. All

things, including men, are parts of God, having emanated by necessity from Him, and returning to Him again by dissolution. There was, therefore, no really independent life and no free will; all was fixed and inevitable. Like Buddha, therefore, they taught that the wise man is he who detaches his mind from the pleasures and ambitions of the vulgar, and holds himself ready to escape from all miseries and misfortunes by death. Zeno, their founder, adorned his doctrine by suicide, and this example was extensively followed by his disciples, who thus showed how little they had of stoicism in the now popular idea of that word. Their morality, as Professor Seeley, himself a Pantheist, says, was never much above 'suicide point.' They were happier, however, than Buddhists, in this —they were tormented with no fear of transmigration, and, according to their theory, suicide was easy. Instead of a weary process of striving to think about the one which is nothing, and has no second, their road to Nirvana was very brief. A warm bath with an opened vein, a cup of hemlock or an inch of polished steel, gave an end to all desire, and the wise man could thus at any moment enter into rest.

It would be wearisome and useless to trace out the many modifications of Pantheism which found a fleeting currency during the early and middle ages of Christian history; and without missing anything essential to our theme, we may leap over a gulf of centuries to Spinoza, who is generally regarded as the founder of modern Pantheism. He is now known to have copied largely from Bruno, who was burned at Rome for heresy in 1600 A.D. There seems, however, little

doubt that in his later days Bruno ceased to be in any true sense a Pantheist. Spinoza may be allowed, therefore, to give his name to doctrines derived in the main from Bruno's earlier writings.

Spinoza fell into the same initial mistake as Xenophanes and his school. Instead of beginning with the observed order of nature and the human mind which observes, and so reasoning up towards the unity it is the business of philosophy to discover, he started with a definition of God, and then had to make the facts of the universe fit in with that arbitrary assumption. His fundamental position is that nothing exists but the self-existent. Whatever can be thought of as not being, has no being. Hence substance is one and eternal. Anything created would not be self-existent; and as only the self-existent exists, nothing can have been created, and the idea is an illusion. Everything that exists is a part of God, who is infinite substance constituted by an infinity of attributes. Everything is but a mode of His attributes, which express the essence of His substance. Hence there is no independent and accountable life in man. There is no moral obligation, no right and wrong, for all our thoughts and actions are modes of God's activity. All our ideas of personal responsibility and of a created universe are unreal. Thus the modern Pantheist fails as utterly to account for the things we want accounted for as the Hindoo, the Buddhist, and the Greek. Having presumed to tell us what substance is, and to call it God, he has no room even for himself in his imaginary universe.

After Spinoza, Hegel, though unintentionally, has done more than any modern thinker to diffuse Pan-

theistic ideas. He was to Spinoza what Heraclitus was to the Eleatics. He saw that Spinoza's self-existent substance was no more an explanation of the universe than Zeno's Being, and so revived the notion of Becoming. He regarded Thought as the ultimate reality (or God) which harmonized the two notions of Being and Becoming. This is the true explanation of his oft-repeated formula that Thought is the unity of Being and non-Being. Universal history is the necessary development of God in time. Natural objects —worlds, men, animals, plants, minerals, vapours— are all so many modes of Divine manifestation. The goal towards which all things are tending is God realizing Himself in finite existence, and especially in man's moral consciousness.

We have now to look upon the latest developments of Pantheism, and to see how it leads in Europe to results not unlike those already seen in India. The ripest and latest fruit of German Pantheism is Pessimism; and Pessimism is Buddhism stripped of mythological ideas and clothed in European language. Arthur Schopenhauer, the founder of Pessimism as a reasoned system of thought, affirmed that Will is the ultimate principle of all things, the one universal substance. This Will is unconscious, but becomes conscious through its very nature, which is to strive for life and the consequent development of intellect. It can have no peace until it becomes unconscious once more through a renunciation of the will to live. This world is a mockery, and is as bad a world as could be conceived, because it is just endurable. If it were a little worse it would be better, because then men would no

longer wish to live, and with their ceasing to desire life, life would cease. He would recommend suicide, but that is too strong an assertion of will to be wise. The only real suicide is Buddha's self-denial—death by the refusal to satisfy hunger of every sort. (The German, however, presents a mournful contrast to the Indian Pantheist in the manner of his actual life.) Progress and human elevation are really curses, not blessings; for the more cultivated the mind, the more miserably conscious men become.

With various modifications, a considerable school of disciples now teach these doctrines. They earnestly hope that the world will gradually reach a point of misery when the whole human race will refuse to beget children, or simultaneously put an end to themselves to escape the snares of desire, and so the goal of unconsciousness—Nirvana—be reached. But lest this should seem too consolatory a prospect, they all confess the possibility, and some assert the certainty, that the eternal substance, Will, will reassert itself, because oblivious of its awful experience, and so the doleful tragedy of the universe begin afresh.

But it may be urged, 'Surely there is no necessary connection between Pantheism and these mournful conclusions! The theory is commonly associated with men of refined and poetic spirit, of intensely reverent and even saintly disposition.' I have no wish to overlook any of these facts; but the men who answer to this description are either not real Pantheists in theory, or are devout and holy in spite of their creed, not because of it. Whether we call the whole universe Matter, or Spirit, or God, if it be all one substance,

with no Being reigning over it and administering His own Will as Law, there is no moral responsibility. If we are all fragments of God, He cannot find fault with us. We are of necessity what we are, and can be no other. Our sense of choice and self-direction is a mistake; we have no life of our own; we are but modes of His being. When a so-called Pantheist prays, he is praying to an unconscious whole, of which he himself is a part. The offerer and receiver of prayer are one. The worshipper and the object of worship are confounded together. Self-reproach is absurd, repentance an illusion, sanctification a foolish attempt to improve what is Eternal and unalterable, yea, Divine.

Some professed Pantheists worship Christ as the fullest and best presentment of the Great All. But, according to their theory, He is no more a manifestation of God than Pilate was, or Judas Iscariot, or Barabbas, or any poor vagrant wandering in our modern cities. The repulsiveness of such a suggestion is the condemnation of the theory; but the theory itself is plain: God is everything. All that is is God. Love and gravitation, human hearts and tigers' hearts, and things without heart, apostles, martyrs, saints, and debauchees, are all modes of the One Being, and all express, as Spinoza insists, some essence of His nature. Storm, decay, disease, crime, all things, are flowing on by unalterable and involuntary movement towards some unimaginable future; but the individual consciousness is but a fleeting phase of the All, and will know nothing of any glories to be revealed. We shall all, according to this theory, be absorbed in the absolute unconscious-

ness: Brahma is the goal of all Pantheistic thought, and not a Father's House.

If further proof be demanded that these are irresistible corollaries of Pantheism, and that its real advocates know them to be so, however much disliked, it may be found in Professor Seeley's book, called 'Natural Religion;' the most noticeable attempt to teach Pantheism as a religion in recent English literature.

Mr. Seeley so defines Nature as not only to include God, but to constitute God. In his vocabulary, God and Nature are interchangeable terms, although he uses them in most fluctuating and contradictory senses. He dismisses the personal God of Christianity, because in his estimation 'personality involves mortality' and 'a body.' He is aware that both Christians and Atheists have insisted that Pantheism, by identifying Nature with God, is resolvable into Atheism, but he strives to evade this just criticism by defining Atheism as the want of any 'Theory of the universe' (p. 36). If a man has a theory, and believes in '*any* regularity in the universe, to which a man must conform himself under penalties' (p. 27), he is a Theist! If he believes only in material laws, Mr. Seeley will not allow him to be called an Atheist, although he may personally glory in that designation. Of course, if such a definition of Theism be admitted, the most dogmatic Atheist is a more thoroughgoing Theist than a cautious Agnostic who thinks there may perhaps be a God, but declines to theorize! Indeed, according to Mr. Seeley, Miss Martineau was as firm and consistent a Theist as the Apostle Paul, for she was quite as decided in her theory of the universe. If the charge of Atheism can only be

escaped by such reckless slaughter of language, Pantheists are clearly Atheists in the hitherto received sense of that word.

To find room in Pantheism for worship, Mr. Seeley shows the same generosity to the word 'worship.' This he defines as 'admiration,' sublimely ignoring the fact that there are more religions of fear than of reverence and adoration. So doing, he benevolently finds worship in all art, however bad its moral tone, and even in a voluptuary's pleasure in sensuous beauty (p. 95). However fair and liberal this teaching may seem when wrapped up in literary gauze and shone upon by the footlights of fancy, it is unspeakably repulsive when viewed in its naked ugliness and in the daylight of calm criticism. From a writer capable of such offences it would be a relief to pass at once; but Mr. Seeley has wide influence, and through his book must be placed in the witness-box to prove against himself and his school of thinkers the truth of what has been said about the connection of Pantheism with immorality and despair.

Take first the question of morality. We have what we call a conscience. We are conscious of inward strife between transient inclination and permanent convictions of duty. We blame ourselves for one set of actions, and are raised in self-respect by another. Ages before men reasoned about the data of Ethics and the evolution of moral judgments, the Hebrews possessed a moral code which has never been surpassed, and has proved itself salt and light to the world. That moral code was founded on the principle that man is subject to another and higher will: that over

man, and so distinct from him as to be a Lawgiver, King, and Judge, an Eternally Righteous and unchangeable God reigns. By this conviction men's lives have been governed, and brought into a measure of internal order and social harmony not otherwise attained. But Pantheism sweeps away Lawgiver, King, and Judge. We are all constituent portions of God, and we act out the eternal laws of our being. Here, then, is the crux. Can Pantheism escape this dissolution of morals? Mr. Seeley, with many evidences of doubt and fear, attempts to show that it can. To escape the charge of Atheism he invents, as already seen, an Atheistic definition of Theism; to evade the charge of immoral tendencies he invents an immoral definition of morality, and sends our consciences adrift by sneering at 'conventional morality.' With a true literary instinct, and with a full knowledge of an English reader's preference for concrete facts, he stakes his position on the lives of two men whom he calls Pantheists. The men whom he honours with selection for this high position are Goethe and Wordsworth, and at great length he discusses their characters as men who illustrate and adorn the moral tendencies of his creed. This is how he writes of Goethe: 'As to the attacks made upon him by the Pietists and the conventional moralists, it might be easy to defend him in general by denying that the religious mode of a given time and place is to be identified with Christianity, or that received proprieties are an infallible standard of morality' (p. 98). If this sentence only meant that the German poet was impatient of Mrs. Grundy, we could most of us endorse it; but it is expressly meant to cover

Goethe's impurity, unfaithfulness, and gross selfishness in the treatment of women. After praising the poet's industry and one or two other 'rare virtues,' Mr. Seeley makes this admission: 'There remains the fact that the idea of duty and self-sacrifice appears not to be very sacred in his mind; rather perhaps to be irritating, embarrassing, odious to him.' Here, then, is a selected model of Pantheistic morality, a man to whom the idea of 'duty' is 'odious'!

Passing from Goethe to Wordsworth, Mr. Seeley has no immoralities to confess. 'He may be called,' he observes, 'the saint of the religion of Nature (*i.e.*, of Pantheism), on account of the unworldliness both of his life and of his writings' (p. 101). But here a preliminary question arises: Has Pantheism any right to claim Wordsworth as its saint? Space forbids a critical examination of Wordsworth's religious views, but it would be superfluous. Mr. Seeley is in the witness-box; let him bear testimony. After four pages of eloquent and just eulogium of Wordsworth's character, he lets fall this admission: 'No doubt Wordsworth's worship of the God in Nature was blended with Christian ideas. A Christian faith in redemption and reconciliation neutralized his sense of the evil which is in the world, and preserved him from the Pessimism which is the besetting difficulty of natural religion' (p. 104). The saint of Pantheism therefore turns out after all to be a Christian, while the poet to whom duty was 'odious' was an undoubted Pantheist. This is the selected evidence that Pantheism is not unfavourable to morality!

Let us now hear what this witness has to say about

the terrible gloom of Pessimism which we have seen gathering over the minds of Pantheists in India and China, and Greece and Germany. The question stands thus: 'Is Pessimism an accidental circumstance, or is it the natural product of the theory?' Having toiled through many chapters to prove that there is not, and cannot be, a personal God reigning over all things, and that the idea of his existence can be dispensed with, without hurt to man's moral and religious character, or to the well-being of society, the shadow of failure falls darkly on his own spirit, and he writes words which show how unable he is to rest in his own conclusions: 'When it is admitted that religion deals in the first instance with the known and natural, then we may well begin to doubt whether the known and natural can suffice for human life. No sooner do we begin to think so, than Pessimism raises its head' (p. 261); *i.e.*, no sooner do we begin to believe that science and art are religion, because nature is God, known through science and worshipped in art, than all light of hope fails, and despondent gloom settles down upon the spirit. This is surely a most remarkable admission on the part of one who has written a book for the express purpose of proving the reality and sufficiency of Natural Religion, which is the admiration of Nature as God. But these words are followed by many more in the same vein, some of which may usefully be quoted here:

'The more our thoughts widen and deepen, as the universe grows upon us, and we become accustomed to boundless space and time, the more petrifying is the contrast of our own insignificance, the more contemptible become the pettiness, shortness, fragility of

the individual life. A moral paralysis creeps over us. For a while we comfort ourselves with the notion of self-sacrifice; we say, "What matter if I pass?—let me think of others!" But the other becomes contemptible no less than the self: all human griefs alike seem little worth assuaging; human happiness too paltry at the best to be worth increasing. The whole moral world is reduced to a point; the spiritual city, "the goal of all the saints" dwindles to "the least of little stars;" good and evil, right and wrong, become infinitesimal, ephemeral matters, while eternity and infinity remain attributes of that only which is outside the realm of morality. Life becomes more intolerable the more we know and discover, so long as everything widens and deepens except our own duration, and that remains as pitiful as ever. The affections die away in a world where everything great and enduring is cold; they die of their own conscious feebleness and bootlessness.'

'Supernatural Religion met this want by connecting Love and Righteousness with eternity. If it is shaken, how shall its place be supplied? And what would Natural Religion avail then?'

'But still, if religion fails, it is only when human life is proved to be worthless.'

It would be difficult to find in all literature a more mournful specimen of conscious failure and despondency than these words supply. Natural Religion, or Pantheism, is of no avail to explain and justify, much less to satisfy, the irrepressible sense of reality and responsibility which man possesses, or to place before him a destiny commensurate with his unquenchable aspirations. It cannot avail to give strength to righteousness,

or hope to endeavour, or to save the purest affections from becoming the instruments of our most horrible torture, when the grave hides the corruption of those we have loved. Nirvana thus becomes the only refuge and rest for those who have passed the few brief years when bounding blood and the mirage of earthly happiness exclude distressing thoughts about the world-wide facts of disease, calamity, cruelty, old age, and death. The only consolation for the loss of Supernatural Religion the Pantheist has to offer is that human life is proved by his own theory to be worthless. Professor Seeley thus, in spite of all his promises and assurances, brings his readers on the road to the same black goal as the ancient Hindoo Sages, and as Buddha, and Zeno, and the German Pessimists. So the cold, dark night of discontent ever follows the joyous day of nature-worship. The soul rejoices in the light of the sun, and is lost in ecstasy as the western sky burns into redness, and gleams into ever-changing glories of purple and green and gold; but these glories are the beauties of fading light, they are the farewell smiles of day. So passes the day-time of Pantheistic worship, and the night cometh when no man can be glad without a God beyond the setting sun; and in that night where Nature fails us, and God is denied, men do the deeds of darkness, and presently they learn to praise 'the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive.' 'For the living know that they shall die, but the dead know not anything.'

Voltaire once said that if there were no moral ruler it would be necessary to invent one to keep the world in order. The history of Materialism and Pantheism

shows that he rightly judged the absolute impossibility of any moral order without a Central and Supreme Administrator of Justice, and a recognised basis of moral obligation in His character and will. The moral consequences of Atheism pertain to any theory of the universe which excludes this Higher than man. To call everything God is only playing with words. Call the universe matter or mind, designate the universal substance as fire, water, motion, thought, mud, dust, or God, and it makes no practical difference, for the phenomena are the same. If it be only one thing, and so including ourselves, it is grinding out an evolution which no one directs or judges, and which cannot be modified or controlled—all notions of liberty are Maya. If there be no power possessing the essential attributes of personality without those accidental limits which define each man; if there be no Father of our spirits, and we are not so far separate from external nature as to be capable of obedience and disobedience; if there be therefore no sin in what we call wrong, and so no hope of correction, forgiveness, renewal of mind, and sanctification from a Redeeming God; if Nothingness be the goal of our involuntary race,—then Buddha was right and Jesus Christ was wrong. Then, too, the German Pessimists are right, and so-called progress, which raises the standard of endeavour, is an evil; all culture of the affections and the intellect is but an increase of sorrow and illusion, and then, instead of fighting the good fight of faith, to lay hold of eternal life, it must be man's wisdom to fight the good fight of mental and emotional suicide, and so hasten his

passage into the Eternal Sleep that knows no dreams.

The only refuge from this inexorable conclusion—a conclusion arrived at by the consistent Pantheists of all ages and nations—is faith in God such as Abraham cherished, and such as, in spite of inveterate tendencies to fall back into Natural Religion, the Hebrew people were disciplined to hand down as a heritage for the world. That faith, purified, expanded, and adapted by Christ to the moral, intellectual, and heartfelt needs of mankind, is the only theory which recognises all the sad and terrible facts of human history and external nature, yet breathes into its recipients a spirit of power, and love, and a courageous joy of hope. It is the only system which teaches the abiding reality and sacred worth of life, yet bids men sacrifice it cheerfully for the sake of righteousness, because to lay down life in such a cause is to gain life more abundantly. Of course, the beauty and desirability of such a faith is no sure evidence of its truth. Thus far we have only seen the impotence of Materialistic or Pantheistic creeds to satisfy the intellect, the heart, or the conscience of men, and how defenceless they appear when the weapons of criticism they have drawn against Christianity are unsheathed against themselves. In future pages the difficulties of faith in the God of the Bible will be considered, and more positive reasons be advanced for holding fast the confidence of so many generations firm unto the end.

## CHAPTER III.

### THEISM.

THE word Theism is really the same as Deism, but it carries with it a different set of associations. Deism (from the Latin word for God) was the chief form of anti-Christian thought in the eighteenth century. It was a theory which held the existence of a Personal God as a conclusion of the natural reason, but repudiated alike the need for and the possibility of any revelation beyond the works of Nature. The name was thoroughly discredited by the issue of the 'Deistic Controversy,' and no one now cares to fight under that flag. Under the term Theism (from the Greek word for God) similar opinions are still held, but so widely have circumstances changed, that these self-styled Theists are now ranged on the side of Belief, while infidelity has assumed more pronounced forms of antagonism to all that is called God. In a future chapter it will be necessary to examine the claims of their religious system, and to expose the straits into which they are driven when called upon to explain the mysteries of God's moral government. Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans, and indeed all who believe in a personal God, are properly called Theists, and as against Materialists and Pantheists have a common

article of faith. They all agree that the universal order is due to the will of a self-existent Being, who is possessed of Power, Wisdom, and Goodness. In fact, with the exception of a few small communities and some isolated thinkers, all Theists confess the God of Abraham as their God.

It may be advisable in this place to make a passing reference to Mr. Matthew Arnold, who has laboured to recommend the Bible to the 'intellectual earnestness' of our day, by declaring the Hebrews' God to be an impersonal energy. It is rather difficult to define this writer's position. Dr. Hunt* claims him as a Pantheist. But what sort of Pantheism is that which defines God as 'the power *not ourselves* which makes for righteousness'? Mr. Arnold leaves room outside God, at any rate, for 'Philistines,' and for an impersonal Satan, who must of course signify in the Bible 'the power not ourselves which makes for' unrighteousness. He must therefore be more of a Parsee than a Pantheist, for his system contains at least ourselves and two powers not ourselves, the one evil, the other good. If he would print a Bible, or, say, Isaiah, with his definition of the Hebrew God given *in extenso* wherever the name of the Deity occurs, it would be at least a literary curiosity, and might do much to exhibit that old prophet's 'lucidity.' Mr. Arnold is only peculiar in the zeal he displays for purging the Bible of all that is distasteful to himself. So far as he directly argues against a Personal God, and against a miraculous revelation, his reasonings are but a literary treatment of ideas more forcibly put by other writers. Wherein he tries to show that the God

* 'Pantheism and Christianity,' p. 326.

of the Bible is an impersonal energy, he must be left to the reader's sense of humour, which is of more value than either logic or metaphysics in detecting nonsense. Whether a Personal God be credible or incredible, there can be absolutely no doubt that the Hebrew Scriptures declare such a Being in the plainest words that man's wit could put together. For thousands of years the word 'God' has been used to designate a Personal Ruler, and Theists from the days of Abraham have refused to acknowledge any image or imagination not possessed of conscious Life. If writers choose to affix a different meaning to the word, no one can prevent the inconvenience; but at any rate this meaning is clear, and in speaking of Theists, Theism, and God, the words will be used in harmony with this definition.

Before proceeding to state the reasons which directly teach that the universe owes its existence to a Personal God, it will be advisable to define more precisely what is meant by the term 'personal.' A great deal of bewildering controversy has been caused by puerile conceptions of personality, and by deliberate attempts to fasten on the idea sundry human limitations which are utterly excluded from it in a Theist's mind. The words in which Xenophanes satirized the elevation of man's own image into an object of worship have already been quoted. This satire has been repeated in endless forms, and its general significance has been gathered up into one dreadful word, 'anthropomorphic,' which every anti-Theist feels it his duty to fling at the idea of a Personal God.

There was some ground for the protests of Xenophanes and the Brahmans of India against the human

monstrosities worshipped as Divine in their days. These were not creators, even in theory, but only creatures born in time and devoid of any attributes to account for their own existence. But it has never yet been shown that personality necessarily involves these defects. Spinoza improved upon the sarcasm of Xenophanes, about horses, lions, and oxen painting gods in their own likeness, by saying that if a circle could think, it would suppose the essence of deity to be circularity. But this only goes to show that even a circle, if it could think, would conceive of a thinking God, only (perhaps) in a circular form. It illustrates the extent to which we are dominated by the familiar association of certain attributes with particular accidents of figure, but it also shows how easy it is to conceive of the same attributes pertaining to a thinker who may have any figure or no figure at all; and it also confirms the truth that only a thinking being can imagine a God, much less be Divine. Similar mistakes run through an immense amount of current literature. 'Personality involves a body and mortality,' affirms the author of 'Natural Religion.' He does not attempt to prove this, but, having acquainted himself with all the persons in the universe, he assures us that they all have bodies, and will die! A fine illustration this, of the new alliance between Literature and Dogma!

Mr. Spencer denies the existence of a conscious God, because consciousness 'is constituted of ideas and feelings caused by objects and occurrences,'* and therefore cannot precede them. But who can explain what this

* *Nineteenth Century*, January, 1884.

means? 'Objects and occurrences' cause 'ideas and feelings,' and these 'constitute' consciousness. Mr. Spencer may be catechised by idealists as to what he means by 'objects and occurrences;' but, granting the reality of these so-called external causes, we naturally inquire, How do they produce ideas and feelings? In whom or in what are these ideas and feelings caused? Can 'objects and occurrences' produce 'ideas and feelings' without an already existing mind to be affected? Can they cause 'ideas and feelings' in a vacuum, or in an organism which is unthinking until mechanically acted upon by them? Let the experiment be tried on trees or dead bodies, and see what an 'object' can effect by causing blows to 'occur.' But as trees and dead bodies cannot enlighten us as to their experiences, we will turn to our own. Am I, the conscious self, nowhere until I receive ideas and feelings from the outside? Is not my existence as subject postulated in the idea of certain objects affecting me? If not, it would be more correct, and far more explicit, to say that 'objects and occurrences' produce a conscious mind, and not merely that they cause 'ideas and feelings.' This, however, would still leave on Mr. Spencer's hands the question how objects can exist apart from some subject to which they are related, and would open the still more bewildering question how these 'objects and occurrences' became possessed of creative power. When the imposing terms in which the dictum is expressed are thus analyzed, no thought remains to be discussed. One might as well talk about a telegraphic operator, sitting in a room with instruments connecting him with a hundred cities, as being constituted by the

clicking of needles caused by electric currents, as talk of a man's consciousness being 'constituted' in the way Mr. Spencer suggests. Object without subject is a word without a meaning. There can be no sights without a seer, no sounds without a hearer, and no sensations can be stimulated except in a conscious being. If there were 'objects and occurrences' before I existed as a conscious subject, they must by implication have been related to some other subject. If they existed before any finite consciousness had been produced, it could only have been as related to the consciousness of an infinite Being. The argument, therefore, by which Mr. Spencer would prove a conscious God an impossibility, not merely fails, but lends an unintended support to the position that the existence of an Infinite Mind, who is a conscious Person, is the necessary correlate to the thought of a world of 'objects and occurrences,' and shows that it would be more philosophical, as well as more religious, to say that the thoughts of His mind are the cause, and not the effects of those 'objects and occurrences' which make up the finite universe and its historic development.

The fact that such a Being is not a metaphysical absurdity may not prove that He exists. Some have argued that it does, but few minds would thereby be convinced. It may most reasonably be held to give a strong evidence of probability, but even this may be waived. What it does unquestionably show is that the Theistic position cannot be put aside by saying that the thoughts of many of the greatest men of all ages have been unthinkable. The way is therefore clear for

a statement of what is really meant by a Personal God in the discussion which ensues.

By a Personal God Theists mean a Living Being who is not, like man, bounded by any bodily organism. They hold that He does not depend therefore on a system of telegraphic nerves as instruments of communication with the material universe, and yet He is not unable to communicate therewith, having modes which are as inscrutable as, though not more so than is, the connection between a man's thought and the movement of his tongue. They regard Him as uncreated, but able to originate and frame an objective universe: as absolute in Himself, but capable of making and setting things and persons in relations with Himself; whereas man can only discern the objects which are around him, and in the midst of which he is placed. They believe that to some extent this God is revealed in His works, yet is no more to be confounded with them than an architect with his buildings, or a father with his children. They hold that to this God belongs the Eternal Power which science declares must exist; the Wisdom which alone can account for the order in which Power is seen to operate, the Goodness without which infinite Power would be an eternal curse, and the Spontaneity of Volition without which power is only potentiality and every other attribute must be sterile.

If these ideas be called 'anthropomorphic,' that ponderous term may well be accepted by Theists as a commendation rather than a reproach. If wisdom, goodness and volition be eliminated from the idea of God, nothing worth calling God is left. To say that

He is not less, but more than a Personal Being, is worse than idle, for it is equivalent to saying that He is without attributes, and logically leads up to the absurdity of the Hindoo Brahma. The attributes ascribed by Theists to God are at least the highest our minds are capable of conceiving. Man is not Divine, but he is assuredly the noblest of things knowable to science. It cannot be unwise, then, to search for God in the direction indicated by a line drawn from the lowest elements to the loftiest heights of known intelligence and power. The elements have no knowledge or wisdom or self-direction. The waters cool and cleanse us without being glad; they engulph us without being grieved. The winds fan us in summer without kindness; they sweep away harvests and vessels without regret. Fire warms our homes in winter or burns a martyr's body with equal indifference, and without being aware of what is done. So machines work on with the same precision, whether doing service or dealing death to mankind. The animals have scarcely any power to discern the results of their acts. Among men, savages are dull in intellect and contracted in sympathy, but as mental and religious culture advances, man rises in ability to understand his fellows, to wish for and promote their welfare, to send forth his thoughts into far-off lands, and to establish intercourse with foreign races. He can acquire dominion over nature, and, by skilled conformity, can command the laws to which the elements are subject. He can conceive the idea of unity and order reigning throughout a universe which transcends his knowledge, and can rejoice in the hope of attaining to some communion with beings of kindred

though superior faculties. Shall we think it wise, then, to go down again and liken God to blind forces and undiscerning elements or abstractions? Having climbed the highest hill we know, shall we plunge down a precipice to find the Most High? Must we not still look up in the same direction of our ascent, and say, as we gaze into the pure blue of unmeasured heavens, 'He looketh down upon these things. High as these heavens are above the earth, so much are His thoughts better than our thoughts, and His wisdom and goodness than our own!'?

To most minds such an idea commends itself with self-evidencing power. History seems to show that only moral reluctance or intellectual bewilderment ever leads to its rejection when fairly presented for belief. Professor Tyndall, whose words have previously been quoted, is not alone in the confession that the theory which would dispense with such a Being does not commend itself to the mind 'in hours of clearness and vigour,' and that in the presence of stronger and healthier thought it ever dissolves and disappears.' J. S. Mill, whose anti-Theistic reasonings will be criticised further on, was by no means convinced by them himself; and if any reader should mistrust his own judgment, let him be emboldened by the knowledge that the arguments he is asked to pronounce unsound reveal the inward dialogue of a mind resolutely set to face the darkest facts and most forbidding problems, but are not the conclusions in which he finally rested. Mill gave as the result of his deliberation an admission which should prepare every student of his essays for the discovery of many fallacies.

'It must be allowed,' he observes, that in the present state of our knowledge the adaptations in Nature afford a large balance of probability in favour of creation by intelligence.'* Such an avowal, from so cautious and, by early training, so prejudiced a thinker, speaks volumes, and probably rather understates the inward persuasion of his mind. In this connection I may also take an opportunity to quote a few words spoken by David Hume which deserve to be carefully weighed by all who are perplexed by his writings, and by the writings of those scientific men who to-day repeat his ideas, and honour him as the founder of their philosophy. At the time of his mother's death his excessive grief was ascribed by a friend to his loss of all Christian hopes, but he significantly replied: 'Though I throw out my speculations to entertain the learned and metaphysical world, yet in other things I do not think so differently from the rest of the world as you imagine.'†

A great number of arguments have been framed to prove the existence of God, but only two will be examined in this chapter: (1) That which maintains that the universe is an effect for which no efficient First Cause can be conceived except God; (2) That which maintains that the marks of order and adaptation which abound in nature declare the existence of a Designer. The argument which is drawn from man's moral nature to prove the existence of a Moral Ruler is reserved for separate consideration in connection with the mystery of evil. For other important and converging lines of evidence, the reader must be re-

* 'Three Essays on Religion,' p. 174.

† Burton's 'Life of Hume,' Vol. I., p. 244.

ferred to works more exclusively devoted to this subject.

Theists sometimes lay it down as an axiom that everything which exists must have had a cause; and thence draw the inference, 'therefore there must have been a First Cause, *i.e.*, God.' But such an argument proves too much, as Atheists are not slow to see. They rejoin, 'Then if God exists, He too must have had a cause, and so on *ad infinitum;* for a First Cause contradicts the axiom laid down.' But the supposed axiom is not an axiom at all, as Mill rightly observes. It is not true that the human mind demands a cause for everything. On the contrary, it can find no rest until it discovers, or seems to discover, some self-existent thing or Person sufficient to account for all else that is. This discovery has been the main object of philosophy from the time of Thales until now. We only insist on asking for a cause when observing things that have evidently had a beginning, and might conceivably never have come into existence. When witnessing a change in nature, we ask what has caused it. But this only shows that we are irresistibly convinced that things do not alter or move unless something is at work to alter them.

Hume's contention, that causation is only invariable sequence, need not detain us. There is some ground for supposing that he himself only regarded it as the *reductio ad absurdum* of Locke's empiricism; and Mill, though sustaining it on abstract grounds, abandons it as a profitless distinction. If valid, it would be more fatal to science than to religion, because it would show that every attempt to connect a movement in the

physical world with its cause involves an act of faith.

We have already seen that Mr. H. Spencer recognises the existence of some 'Cause which transcends our knowledge and conception,' and is itself 'without beginning or end.' Mill makes the same admission, but in a more guarded form, and advances various considerations which greatly obscure the road to that conclusion for his readers, and which, therefore, need examination. He affirms, 'There is in Nature a permanent element, and also a changeable: the changes are always the effects of previous changes; the permanent existences, so far as we know, are not effects at all.'* Notice well that expression, 'all changes are the results of previous changes;' *i.e.*, every effect must have had a cause, and yet every cause must have been an effect! Here, then, he so defines causation as to involve an infinite series of dependent and derived changes.

But, having given this definition, he cannot be satisfied with it, and is well aware that the human mind never can be content with what is as absurd as the old Hindoo myth, that the world rests on an elephant, the elephant stands on a tortoise, and the tortoise stands on something else, and so on. In the same sentence, however, the writer postulates 'a permanent element in nature.' In so doing, he violates his whole system of philosophy, but he cannot help that. When asked what that permanent element is, he can only reply, it is 'the specific elementary substance or substances of which it consists and their inherent properties.' Here, then, is a philosopher

* 'Three Essays on Religion,' p. 142.

who protests we only know phenomena, going behind the scenes to affirm that something really underlies them, and that it is permanent, and has properties! This, however, is not all we are said to know. 'These' (substances, etc.) 'are not known to us as beginning to exist; within the range of human knowledge they had no beginning, consequently no cause, though they themselves are causes or con-causes of everything that takes place.' Surely this is not very lucid! In one paragraph we are told that 'changes are always the effects of previous changes,' and then directly afterwards all these changes are traced up to an unchanging 'permanent element'! What would Mill have said about a village preacher who ventured to talk like that?

But perhaps Mill can tell us a little more about this permanent element in nature. In the next paragraph he slides the word 'material' into use as an equivalent for 'permanent existences' or substances in nature. It is an unpardonable sin in a logician, but let it pass. In this paragraph he proceeds to 'analyze more closely the nature of the causes of which mankind have experience' (p. 144). 'Whenever,' he writes, 'a physical phenomenon is traced to its cause, that cause when analyzed is found to be a certain quantity of Force combined with certain collocations.' Let it be carefully noticed that all observed causes are said to consist of two things, 'force' and 'collocation.' Now, collocation means either the act of placing, or the state of being placed, or placed with something else. All causes, therefore, consist, according to Mill, of force and substance, considered as divided in many parts, and the arrangement of these parts in space. Having

thus declared that all known causes contain these three things, he proceeds to say: 'The last great generalization of science, the conservation of Force, teaches us that the variety in the effects depends partly upon the amount of the force, and partly upon the diversity of the collocations. The force is essentially one and the same, and there exists of it in nature a fixed quantity, which (if the theory be true) is never increased or diminished. Here, then, we find, even in the changes of material nature, a permanent element, to all appearance the very one of which we were in quest. This it is, apparently, to which, if to anything, we must assign the character of First Cause—the cause of the material universe' (p. 145).

Let us carefully analyze this piece of logic. All causes known to us consist of at least three things; Force, substances (supposed by Mill to be material), and the collocation of those substances; yet somehow out of this necessary trinity of causes we are asked, without a word of explanation, to believe that one alone—viz., Force—is the cause of the other two, and so through them the sole cause of the material universe! Broadly viewed, this is very startling, and to sceptical minds quite incredible. But let us do it the homage of a closer inspection. Force, we are told, is one and the same in amount in nature, yet the amount of Force present in particular causations varies. If this be so, we want to know why the amount varies? what causes it to vary? Is it due to 'the diversity of collocations?' If so, we go on to ask, 'What causes the diversity of collocations? Is it Force?' Yes, it must be Force, for this is the First Cause. But we

have already been told that only variable amounts of Force can vary the collocations, and so ask again, what causes the amounts to vary? Thus we get on to a logical seesaw. Each end moves the other end, yet neither can start of itself. Each cause is prior to the other, and yet one is labelled First! To account for the material universe, Mill has, therefore, most conclusively proved against himself that even if matter and force are eternal, as he is pleased to assume, reason, guided by experience, can find no rest until it discovers a Power capable of so starting and adjusting Force as to produce diversified collocations of matter.

The question to which we are now brought is this: Have we any knowledge or experience of any sort of power which may be thought to indicate the nature of such an efficient First Cause? The only thing at all answering to this requirement is the human will. Let us see what help there is for us here.* Imagine the case of a philosopher who, while gravely walking down the street, feels a sudden sensation of pain in his head, as if from a severe blow. Immediately after, he hears a stone fall on the pavement at his feet, and sees it roll away into the gutter. Even David Hume would not hesitate to say, 'That stone struck me,' particularly

* I have not thought it necessary to trouble the reader with any discussion of the freedom of the will. The argument in the text does not depend for its validity on any theory as to the manner in which volition is determined. Mill candidly admits, 'We have nothing to do here with the freedom of the will itself as a mental phenomenon—with the *vexata questio* whether volition is self-determining or determined by causes. To the question now in hand it is only the effects of volition that are relevant, not its origin' (p. 149).

if he found it stained with fresh warm blood like that streaming from his own cranium. But then that stone could not have come into that peculiar 'collocation' with his head unless set in motion by some force. It did not fall from the skies; there is no cause up yonder to account for its descent. But see! there runs a boy round the corner. 'He threw it!' cries a bystander. The philosopher believes this witness, and goes in chase of the culprit, mindless of any theory about free-will, or molecular forces, or the value of human testimony. Now, we can see that the said philosopher, when he began to run, was provoked by a physical antecedent, and yet the blow did not physically cause him to run. There is a mystery in this which might detain us; but let us rather think of the boy, and ask how the stone came flying. The boy's hand picked it up, whirled it in the air, and imparted momentum to it. His hand is a mechanical contrivance, which was moved by sundry muscles, and they were governed by nerves, and these were connected with the brain, and received their impulsion from—what? It is all mechanical up to this point, just as the universe seems to be mechanical until we get where Mill stranded us, crying out for a first Master of the Forces. We can trace that boy's nerves to cells in the brain, and out of those cells there came, O! mystery of mysteries! an entirely new train of physical sequences. But that cell is our physical terminus. In that tiny chamber we are like Pompey when he penetrated the Holy of Holies in the Jewish temple, and said, 'These people have no God,' because to his eyes it was vacant. Arrived at that cell, we are like all modern philosophers when their thoughts

pass behind the veil of the last visible phenomena of the universe. Science, by killing the boy and lending a microscope, can show us his brain-cells, but it can show nothing to explain their peculiar function. We can only return for further light into our own personal consciousness, and so doing, no one will hesitate to say, 'There must be in that boy a thinking mind, an intelligent conscious life, which wills and uses his body as an instrument; just as I am conscious that I myself am in my body, which is not me but mine, and which I feel myself responsible for using wisely and kindly in the world.' Our conclusion, therefore, is the same as the philosopher's as he runs in chase. We are quite sure that some waggish or spiteful thought led that urchin to will; and that imperceptible will—known to him by consciousness, and known to us as an irresistible inference from the facts of experience and observation —that will directed the nerves, which stirred the muscles, which moved the bony skeleton of the arm, which sent the stone flying, and so caused that inert bit of matter to do a philosopher an injury, which may perhaps spoil the logic of an article on 'science and religion' which he is preparing for some review next month.

It seems reasonable to suppose that we have now discovered what we were in search of, namely, some sort of power known to us by experience, which may be thought to indicate the nature of an efficient First Cause. What objections then can be urged against the supposition? Mill has only two demurs, and confesses that if these are answered the argument is good.

His first objection is, that Will as known to us does not create Force, but only employs the force which already exists in a latent or potential condition. We can well afford to make the concession demanded. Let it be granted then, that the human Will can only use existing stores of Energy, or, keeping to Mill's own language, of Force. That is precisely the power we are inquiring after. Such a will would suffice to give us those 'diversified collocations' of matter, and those various 'amounts' of Force, which are required to produce all the changes and events comprised in the 'cosmos, or order of the universe.' This is all the present argument requires us to discover. Theorists say, 'Give us Matter and Force, and we will explain the universe.' We first of all reply that these stupendous gifts are not in our power to bestow. If any man can find them, he is welcome to them, although at present they are assumptions, not demonstrated existences. For the sake of more clearly exposing the weakness of their boast, however, we make these bold mendicants a logical loan of 'Matter and Force,' and say, 'Now explain the universe.' Thus generously treated, it immediately transpires that they cannot get their Force to stir their Matter, or their Matter to collocate itself without being stirred. Coming to their aid, we say, 'Will could employ your Force, and thereby adjust your Matter.' Clearly, then, it is as ungrateful as it is unreasonable to reply, 'But Will can only employ existing Force'! Mill's first objection, therefore, is no objection at all, and unless the second proves more real, the case, by his own admission, is closed.

The second objection is, that 'all the power that Will possesses over phenomena is shared, as far as we have the means of judging, by other and much more powerful agents' (p. 149). These other agents are said to be 'chemical action; for instance, electricity, heat, the mere presence of a gravitating body.' There is at least courage in this assertion. Did any chemist ever find his materials develop spontaneous and eccentric activities, such as we have seen emerging from a youth of wilful disposition? Is he ever thwarted in his experiments by waggish and incalculable proceedings on the part of his gases, so that he is driven to say 'There is some volitional sprite hidden in this retort, and it is serving me tricks like a boy?' Do electricians ever find tokens of free agency in their batteries? Do astronomers tell us of vagaries or lack of gravity among the stars? Does a planet ever run for a change into another solar system, or Jupiter, complaining of being cold, select an orbit nearer to the sun? No; all the agents mentioned by Mill are well known to be mere names for ascertained modes of motion, and they always operate in a certain and undeviating order. Chemical, electrical, and dynamical sciences are only possible because these changes are regular and fixed. How, then, can it be said that these agents share 'all the power that Will possesses over phenomena'? Man's will can tame and utilize these agents, although so 'much more powerful' than himself. The chemist is able to produce many startling effects which unguided Force would never evolve. The electrician enables us to converse with men through the Atlantic, and illumines cities and palaces, so that the night shines about

us as the day. If Mill had waited for chemical agents to produce ink of their own accord, or for electricity to shape a pen, or for gravitating bodies to do the work of the printing-press, that 'Essay on Theism' would never have been published. 'The power that the Will possesses over phenomena is' *not* 'shared, as far as we have the means of judging,' by any other agents; and this branch of our discussion may fitly be closed by the quotation of a few words with which Mill prefaced the remarkable passage now criticised: 'If it be true that Will can originate, not indeed Force, but the transformation of Force from some other of its manifestations into that of mechanical motion, and that there is within human experience no other agency capable of doing so, the argument for a Will as the originator, though not of the universe, yet of the cosmos, or order of the universe, remains unanswered' (p. 148).

When the foundations are removed, it is superfluous, generally speaking, to demolish the superstructure. The remainder of Mill's 'Essay on Theism' is vitiated by the assumption that he has made good the positions now shown to be untenable. If Will be proved the only thinkable cause of motion and order in the cosmos, it carries Mind with it, because volition is admitted to be one of the three great mental phenomena, namely: intelligence, emotion, and volition. There is no need to cumber this discussion with any theory of what 'mind-stuff' is, but it may be desirable to criticise Mill's argument to prove that a thinking mind might originally have been produced by unconscious matter. His sole reliance is on the analogy of Nature, which he

declares abounds with facts to prove that 'causes can give rise to products of a more precious or elevated kind than themselves' (p. 152). If science can furnish these facts we must consider their significance. But where are they to be found? Mill points to one very wide class of phenomena, a class as wide indeed as the animal and vegetable kingdoms together, and on this he triumphantly rests his case, and esteems it won. Consider attentively, then, his facts. 'How vastly nobler and more precious, for instance, are the higher vegetables and animals, than the soil and manure out of which, and by which, and by the properties of which, they are raised up!' (p. 152). It might be unkind to ask what 'soil' is made of, and to be very curious about 'manures'; but be it known, for the benefit of depressed agriculturists and bewildered cattle-breeders in these hard times, that they only need 'soil and manure' to produce the precious corn, fruit trees, sheep, and oxen, which in their ignorance they have been accustomed to propagate in a costly manner from previous specimens of their respective kinds! If our harassed fellow-citizens will take a note of this, the farming interests will immediately revive, and when privileged to see the plentiful products of this economical process, we will with one accord admit that not only are animals and vegetables, but that man's mind also is the product of 'soil and manure,' and not of a Living and Wise God.

So far, we have seen reasons for holding that a First Cause is a necessity of thought, and that to account for the facts of the universe that First Cause must possess Power and Will. Our last thoughts lead us to

a further proposition, viz., That the First Cause must have been possessed of Wisdom. This brings us to what is popularly known as the argument from Design in Nature, but is more accurately stated as an argument from marks of adaptation and order to a Designer. This argument fell out of use for a time; but Science is every day supplying new illustrations of its cogency, and even the language of Darwin has no meaning unless Nature is the work of One who adapts means to ends with foresight and wisdom.

To state this argument aright would require a survey of the Universe. There is nothing unreasonable in nature when sufficiently examined. All things have their use, and many things are useful to other things in the most remote parts of space, and through measureless cycles of time. The gas-light which illumines our houses and streets is due to the energy of the sun millions of miles away, and millions of years ago. The soil in which we sow our seeds is able to nourish them because enriched through millenniums of apparently wasted life and useless death. 'The heavens no longer declare the glory of God,' exclaimed an Atheist, 'but the glory of Hipparchus, Kepler and Newton.' Yet unimaginable ages before man entered this little infant-school we call our world, the stars were rushing in their spheres, globe circling round globe, system whirling round system with faultless truth, so that astronomical days, and weeks, and years, made up of thousands like our own, are marked with an exactitude no chronometers approach. Before a mathematician began to calculate the universe was constructed on principles so perfect that man's most marvellous science is merely

their discovery; and so complex that the skill of those half-dozen men who stand alone in their mathematical attainments is confessedly incompetent to resolve some of the most elementary problems they present. Is it conceivable then that no mind was engaged in the production of this which only mind can contemplate and admire? Is it reasonable to suppose that we late-comers on this insignificant planet are the wisest beings in the universe? Had these wonders never been surveyed until men made telescopes? Is there no one mind to whom the general order is known in its unity and vastness? Great is the credulity of those who can presume to say 'No' to these questions.

It would greatly add to the interest and impressiveness of the argument to consider some of the special adaptations which abound in nature. The human eye viewed in conjunction with the phenomena of light and the great luminaries in the distant heavens might furnish materials for volumes. Every organ in man's body is a marvel that might repay a lifetime spent in study. Every animal that exists is a mystery of skill, and every plant that grows a sign and wonder. Our object, however, would not be gained if we culled some fascinating beauties of modern discovery, and said, 'Behold the marks of a Divine Artificer!' Presuming that the reader is acquainted with such facts, our little remaining space must be devoted to the more prosaic task of answering some objections which are urged against the Theistic inference.

It is objected by Mill to this argument that it proves the Designer to be the Former, not the Creator of the substance of the universe. The reply is obvious. It

was not intended to prove more. The Theist, whether Christian or not, is not called upon to deny the eternity of matter. 'By faith we understand that the worlds have been *framed* by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things that do appear' (Heb. xi. 3). This is all that Theism is obliged to assert, and all that Christians are called upon by their Scriptures to believe.

Again, Mill urges that this argument does not prove the Maker of the universe Infinite. Perhaps not. It can only logically prove the Maker to be capable of making the universe which has been made, and that is all we want. If anyone can define and delimit the universe, he may then proceed to delimit its Maker. When the first work has been accomplished, we will, if alive, discuss the second. Meanwhile our knowledge of the universe is, as Carlisle said, something like the knowledge of the ocean possessed by a minnow in his native creek. The universe itself is infinite to our minds, but given a Being capable of producing even what is known, an attempt to set bounds to His Wisdom and Power would scarcely be a mark of sagacity.

A third objection is more extraordinary. Mill affirms that marks of Design are a proof of weakness in their maker. He writes: 'It is not too much to say that every indication of design in the cosmos is so much evidence against the Omnipotence of the Designer. For what is meant by Design? Contrivance: the adaptation of means to an end. But the necessity for contrivance—the need of employing means—is a consequence of the limitation of power. Who would have recourse to means if to attain his end his mere word

was sufficient? The very idea of means implies that the means have an efficacy which the direct action of the being who employs them has not. Otherwise they are not means, but an incumbrance. A man does not use machinery to move his arms. If he did, it could only be when paralysis had deprived him of the power of moving them by volition. But if the employment of contrivance is in itself a sign of limited power, how much more so is the careful and skilful choice of contrivances? Can any wisdom be shown in the use of means, when the means have no efficacy but what is given them by the will of him who employs them, and when his will could have bestowed the same efficacy on any other means? Wisdom and contrivances are shown in overcoming difficulties, and there is no room for them in a Being for whom no difficulties exist' (p. 177).

It is somewhat difficult to criticise with seriousness such ingenious trifling. No Theist supposes that God resorted to the use of machinery for the production of the universe, nor does the argument from the phenomena of adaptation suggest, much less imply, that He did. The Scriptures state that all things were framed by the word of God, and in this connection 'word' is a picturesque synonym for will. 'He spake, and it was done.' This is our theory. Now suppose that a man were able to produce a steam-engine by merely willing it to appear, would the presence in that machine of 'contrivances,' and the adaptation of its several parts to one another, and of all together to some useful purpose, be an indication that 'means' were employed in its construction? Or suppose that he were able

to produce a human eye by the energy of his will, would that indicate that he needed that eye as an organ of sight? If God had needed to contrive an eye for Himself to see with, or a telescope to survey His remote dominions, that would have proved Him finite and defective, just as a need for spectacles proves men. But then Theism says that eyes were made because it pleased God to create seeing creatures in correspondence with a glorious universe, which was also created for them to behold and take pleasure therein. The contrivances and the objects they subserve are alike a part of the design. Without such adaptation of finite parts to finite uses there would have been no universe. If Science should ever come upon some store of ancient implements which were evidently those used by the Creator in fashioning the world, then it might be urged that God had to employ machinery to effect His creative task. It is, however, the absence of all such traces of a living workman which renders so many sceptical about the universe being 'God's handiwork.' They can see no tools. They can see no hand to wield such things. Hence they say, 'All things came of themselves.' If God made the universe, as Theists believe, He certainly did it without tools. If Mill's argument, therefore, means anything, it means that creation is itself a sign of weakness! Such a plea may be left to itself.

Another objection to the argument from visible adaptation to the existence of a designing mind has been stated by Professor Huxley in a celebrated and often-echoed passage, which occurs in his reply to sundry criticisms on 'The Origin of Species.' 'It is

singular,' he remarks, 'how differently one and the same book will impress different minds. That which struck the present writer on his first perusal of the "Origin of Species" was the conviction that Teleology as commonly understood had received its death-blow at Mr. Darwin's hand. For the Teleological argument runs thus: An organ or organism (*a*) is precisely fitted to perform a function or purpose (*b*); therefore it was specially constructed to perform that function. In Paley's famous illustration, the adaptation of all the parts of the watch to the function, or purpose, of showing the time, is held to be evidence that the watch was specially contrived to that end, on the ground that the only cause we know of competent to produce such an effect as a watch which shall keep time is a contriving intelligence adapting the means directly to that end. Suppose, however, that anyone had been able to show that the watch had not been made directly by any person, but that it was the result of the modification of another watch which kept time but poorly; and that this, again, had proceeded from a structure which could hardly be called a watch at all, seeing that it had no figures on the dial, and the hands were rudimentary; and that going back and back in time we came at last to a revolving barrel as the earliest traceable rudiment of the whole fabric; and imagine that it had been possible to show that all these changes had resulted, first, from a tendency of the structure to vary indefinitely, and secondly, from something in the surrounding world which helped all variations in the direction of an accurate time-keeper, and checked all those in other directions; then it is obvious that the force of Paley's

argument would be gone. For it would be demonstrated that an apparatus thoroughly well adapted to a particular purpose might be the result of a method of trial and error worked by unintelligent agents, as well as of the direct application of the means appropriate to that end by an intelligent agent. Now, it appears to us that what we have here, for illustration's sake, supposed to be done with the watch, is exactly what the establishment of Darwin's theory will do for the organic world.'*

It is indeed 'singular how differently one and the same book will impress different minds;' *e.g.*, it is rather remarkable how any acute person could read the passage just quoted without being impressed with its inconsequence. The extravagant exercise of that most unscientific faculty, the imagination, carries its own refutation in every line. We simply cannot conceive what we are asked to suppose; and when a theory requires for its illustration the invention of an unthinkable process, it must be in a bad case. Paley's argument is that, so far as our experience extends, mechanical adaptations to useful ends are always the product of thinking minds; and this no one disputes. Therefore, he reasons, we are constrained to believe that Nature, which abounds in mechanism, must be the work of a wise Designer. Professor Huxley's argument is, that if something could be proved to have happened that we know never did occur, and never can occur, then we should have within our experience a parallel to his theory of Nature. Which of these two arguments is the more philosophic needs no pointing out.

* 'Lay Sermons,' pp. 330, 331.

But let us carry this argument another stage. Should it ever be proved that the universe has grown out of collocated molecules which possess the power and potency thus revealed, it will only make the argument from order and adaptation more cogent. It is a great triumph of human skill to make a watch; but still thousands of men can do it. But how much more wonderful would it be to contrive a watch which could reproduce itself, and whose progeny would go on improving through many generations, until each watch showed upon its dial-plate the time in every earthly longitude and latitude, and the cycles of all the planets, and presently of all the stars! But if this were marvellous, how much more so to produce a 'revolving barrel,' which by dint of much revolving could at last evolve such a reproductive and ever-improving generation of watches, and a host of other reproductive machines as well! Yet one stage more. How still more marvellous—yes, how truly miraculous—it would be to produce a material, which of itself could produce a barrel, which could bring forth such a magnificent series of effects! What is the making of a watch, or of a million different machines, in comparison with the production of atoms of such potency as the evolution theory postulates?—such potency that, once collocated and set in motion, not only watches, but watch-makers and mathematicians, Paleys, Huxleys, Newtons, and Shakespeares, spontaneously come forth!*

* Since writing the above, I have seen it stated that Professor Huxley has admitted the fallacy of his illustration, and of the argument it was elaborated to sustain. I have not met with his actual words, but gladly append this note in confirmation of what is written, and in justice to him. I have not omitted the quotation

The propositions supported in this chapter may now be summarised. That metaphysical objections to the Theistic idea of a Personal God are not such as can be sustained, and are for the most part gratuitous assumption. That the so-called anthropomorphism of Theism is, when rightly viewed, its commendation, not its condemnation. That the facts of the universe point unmistakably to a self-existent First Cause. That the facts of consciousness and the observed order of nature indicate that this First Cause must be possessed of the attributes Wisdom and Volition, which can only belong to a Living God. In order to test these propositions, we have reviewed the strongest arguments advanced against them by the most honoured men who have criticised the Theistic belief. If they emerge from the ordeal unscathed by the powerful attacks to which they have been subjected, it is tolerably evident that the fire which is to burn up faith in the Living God has not yet been kindled on the earth.

---

and its examination, however, because the passage is still read by thousands who know nothing of the disclaimer, and also because it represents a line of argument which has been extensively adopted by many writers and speakers of less note. The fact that such an argument should ever have appeared satisfactory to Mr. Huxley's mind is surely a signal warning to admirers of his teachings.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE STRAITS OF THEISM WITHOUT REVELATION.

We have now advanced to a point in our investigations where believers in God begin to separate. Standing on the verge of the unseen and eternal, they differ in their mental attitude towards that which lies behind the veil, and in their opinions as to the kind and degree of knowledge which may be had of God. They agree in confessing that the Great First Cause cannot be perceived in the same manner as phenomena, and also in affirming, as against Agnostics, that some things may be known respecting Him because clearly manifested in the effects observable in Nature, and experienced in our conscious life. But here their agreement terminates. Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans go beyond this, and say that God has spoken to men 'by divers portions and in divers manners.' All three affirm that He thus communicated a special knowledge of His mind and will to the Patriarchs, and to Moses and the Prophets. Christians add that this revelation culminated in the person of Jesus Christ. Mohammedans, while deeming Jesus a teacher sent from God, revere the Prophet of Mecca as the bearer to mankind of the latest and most precious disclosure of the Divine will. Beyond these there are Theists who reject all alleged revelations,

asserting, like the Deists before them, that whatever is true in the three great monotheistic religions may be ascertained and justified by the human reason working in the light of Nature. They limit the action of God to an original causation, insisting that any subsequent interposition of His will would amount to a confession of defect in the system created, or to a change of mind in the Creator, which would imply defect in Himself. A miracle means in their judgment the correction of a fault in the thing constructed; just as clocks only need repair and regulation because their makers are unable to endow them, like Nature, with powers of self-adjustment and recuperation. They insist that the universe came forth from the creative hand in germ, and has been evolved without the need for being touched, modified, or added to by its Author. Christianity they repudiate for various reasons, but primarily because it is confessedly a remedial scheme, and is thus supposed to impugn the perfection of the Creator's work. They also contend that any conceivable revelation would constitute a breach of that continuity which natural science declares is not only a law of Nature, but the law of all natural laws, the ultimate basis of the very notion of law itself.

These views will not be endorsed in their entirety by all who class themselves among Theists. Not a few attempt to reconcile a belief in the constant activity of God and His ceaseless communion with human souls, with a denial of everything miraculous in revelation. Some of these desire to be included among Christians because revering Christ as the foremost among the sons of men, the highest type of moral excellence, and the most inspiring example we can select for imitation.

They love God as their Father and worship Him as they think Christ inculcated. I have no wish to attenuate their creed by confounding them with the more logical but less religious Theists just described. Whether they occupy a tenable position will be considered hereafter. But to whatever extent their ideas are fairly resolvable into a denial of a Divine revelation to man of truths not discoverable by the unaided reason, their logical, if not their admitted, position is beset with all the difficulties now to be advanced. The purpose of this chapter, however, is not to discuss any objections urged against revelation in general and Christianity in particular, but to try as a previous question whether Theism is able to justify its faith in an infinitely good and wise God, while repudiating all professed communications from Him to mankind.

The statement of this question exhibits the extreme inconvenience of using the word 'Theist' to designate a section, or several small sections of those who believe in a Personal God. The great strife of our age is between Theism and Atheism, and the former name cannot be spared for the narrow purpose of a denominational title. There is no other word which can replace it as a generic term, seeing that Deism is historically wedded to Anti-Christian opinions, and cannot now be revived in a broader sense. With every wish therefore to show courtesy, and to speak of men by the names they prefer, it is impossible to do so in this case without causing great confusion of thought. To prefix some qualifying term such as 'Bare,' or 'Mere,' or 'Pure,' whenever the word Theism is used in a restricted sense, is objectionable. Of these adjectives, which have all been used

for the purpose, the two former seem contemptuous, while the last appears to admit that Christianity is only an impure form of Theism. For the purposes of brevity and clearness I shall therefore employ the term Deism in this chapter to denote the theory under review, reserving Theism for that wider use which includes every form of belief in a Personal God.

No theory of the universe can hold its ground against Atheistic Pessimism which fails to reconcile the prevalence of pain and moral evil with the Creator's goodness. Paul wrote, 'We know that the whole creation groaneth,' and Atheists echo mockingly, 'The whole creation groaneth.' Deism generally tries to minimise the facts of human misery, and of Nature's travail, but, however reduced, they remain an appalling spectacle. Christians hold doctrines which propose a solution of the problem, while Atheists say that no conceivable explanation can be satisfactory. For a moment, therefore, Atheists and Christians stand side by side, the one party with derisive laughter, the other with sympathetic grief, to remark the straits into which the Deist is driven when attempting to vindicate the ways of God.

Our attention must first be directed to the mystery of pain. The more light we get from physical sources, the wider we perceive to be the kingdom in which pain has reigned. The earth's crust is one vast sepulchre of perished animals, most of which endured and inflicted pain. Man's own life from the birth-cry to the death-throe is haunted by pain. Can this declare, or even be reconciled with, the Creator's goodness?

An impartial student of Nature may no doubt arrive

at Paley's conclusion, that there is a preponderance of pleasure over pain; but this does not account for so vast a remainder in the other scale, nor does it explain the obvious fact that it is most unequally distributed. It may be observed that pain operates in various beneficial ways, and is not inflicted, as we might expect it would be, by one who finds pleasure in the sight of anguish. Pain seems to be a safeguard of all vital organisms, warning of danger, and often enforcing a cessation of self-destructive actions. So far as the animals are concerned there are good reasons for believing that they suffer immeasurably less than we are apt to imagine. In many cases of apparent anguish, sensation is probably suspended. Their pains, moreover, are only isolated sensations, and, therefore, not comparable with those which man's moral and intellectual faculties connect with his past and future history. It is also noticeable that as our nervous system is constituted, pain is the inseparable concomitant of pleasure, the very susceptibility to pleasant sensations carrying with it the possibility of being affected too strongly, or in unsuitable ways. Dr. Maudsley seems also to think that pains are less easily recalled than pleasures;* but I fear this is a mistake. Strictly speaking, no sensation can ever be recalled without the recurrence of a physical cause. But to whatever extent feelings can be remembered, most people will think that painfulness neither aids nor impedes their recollection. If, however, a Deist thinks Dr. Maudsley's theory helps him a little, I shall not strive to take away that very reed-like crutch. But,

* 'The Physiology of Mind,' pp. 537-8.

after all allowances have been made, what do these mitigations prove? They are to the Divine character, as impugned by Pessimism, only what extenuating circumstances are when pleaded in a criminal's defence. They prove to most minds, though not to all, that the world was not made by a malicious fiend; but they are not sufficient to show that pain is consistent with the theory of creation by an all-powerful, all-wise, and perfectly good God. The Deists of the last century brought many objections against Christianity as inconsistent with Divine benevolence, while insisting that the light of Nature was clear and unmistakable. Against that argument it was urged, with final and absolutely conclusive force by Butler, that there was no moral difficulty in the Christian revelation which was not to be found also in the system of Nature. He did not press that answer beyond the logical necessity of the controversy then in hand, or he might have proved those difficulties fatal to Deism. His book left Deism and Christianity weighted with analogous problems, and so, while closing one controversy, it cleared the ground for the more fundamental debates of our own time. Since his day the opinions of scientific men have undergone a great revolution, and the discoveries of geology have immensely added to the array of facts to be explained. As a specimen of the indictment which may be framed against that system of Nature which Deism regarded as so perfect, it may be well to quote a somewhat lengthy passage from J. S. Mill:

'In sober truth, nearly all the things which men are hanged or imprisoned for doing to one another are

Nature's every-day performances. Killing, the most criminal act recognised by human laws, Nature does once to every being that lives ; and, in a large proportion of cases, after protracted tortures such as only the greatest monsters whom we read of ever purposely inflicted on their living fellow-creatures. . . . . Nature impales men, breaks them as if on the wheel, casts them to be devoured by wild beasts, burns them to death, crushes them with stones like the first Christian martyr, starves them with hunger, freezes them with cold, poisons them with the quick or slow venom of her exhalations, and has hundreds of other deaths in reserve, such as the ingenious cruelty of a Nabis or a Domitian never surpassed. All this Nature does with the most supercilious disregard both of mercy and justice, emptying her shafts upon the best and noblest indifferently with the meanest and worst; upon those who are engaged in the highest and worthiest enterprises, and often as the direct consequence of the noblest acts, and, it might almost be imagined, as a punishment for them. She mows down those on whose existence hangs the well-being of a whole people, perhaps the prospect of the human race for generations to come, with as little compunction as those whose death is a relief to themselves, or a blessing to those under their noxious influence. Such are Nature's dealings with life. Even when she does not intend to kill, she inflicts the same tortures in apparent wantonness. . . . . Next to taking life (equal to it according to a high authority) is taking the means by which we live ; and Nature does this, too, on the largest scale and with the most callous indifference. A single

hurricane destroys the hopes of a season; a flight of locusts, or an inundation, desolates a district; a trifling chemical change in an edible root starves a million of people. The waves of the sea, like banditti, seize and appropriate the wealth of the rich and the little all of the poor, with the same accompaniments of stripping, wounding, and killing as their human antitypes. Everything, in short, which the worst men commit against life or property is perpetrated on a larger scale by natural agents.'*

Again—'Those who flatter themselves with the notion of reading the purposes of the Creator in His works, ought in consistency to have seen grounds for inferences from which they have shrunk. If there are any marks at all of special design in creation, one of the things most evidently designed is that a large proportion of all animals should pass their existence in tormenting and devouring other animals. They have been lavishly fitted out with the instruments necessary for that purpose; their strongest instincts impel them to it, and many of them seem to have been constructed incapable of supporting themselves by any other food. If a tenth part of the pains which have been expended in finding benevolent adaptations in all nature had been employed in collecting evidence to blacken the character of the Creator, what scope for comment would not have been found in the entire existence of the lower animals, divided, with scarcely an exception, into devourers and devoured, and a prey to a thousand ills from which they are denied the faculties necessary for protecting themselves. If we are not obliged to believe

* 'Three Essays on Religion,' p. 28.

the animal creation to be the work of a demon, it is because we need not suppose it to have been made by a Being of infinite power' (p. 58).

This is a very terrible passage, and one which Mill has been severely blamed for writing; but from the standpoint of a mere observer of physical facts it is perfectly fair, and assuredly it is a passage no Theist can be allowed to overlook. For my own part, I have no wish to restrict the scope of what is called Natural Theology, or to diminish the force of any argument for the Divine benevolence; but I confess that, without appealing to the whole scheme of moral culture and redemption which is inseparably identified with the revelation of God in Christ, I can find no weapon with which to repel Mill's attack. If pain and moral evil were connected by uniform workings of natural law, we might find refuge in that fact as an indication of creative goodness. But then, as Mill shows, and as the patriarch Job bewailed, that connection does not visibly exist. Voltaire wished to maintain the goodness of God while scoffing at Revelation, yet in his Dialogue between two 'Worshippers of God' the speakers differ only in the degree of their despondency. One of them exclaims: 'The globe . . . . is a vast field of carnage and infection. . . . Man is the most miserable of all the animals together. . . . Take away a few sages, and the herd of human beings is nothing but a horrible assemblage of unfortunate criminals, and the globe contains nothing but corpses. I tremble to have to complain once more of the Being of beings, while casting a careful gaze over this terrible picture. I wish I had never been born.' The Dialogue closes

with a confession from the more hopeful thinker that 'we are in a tempest,' and that if better days are to come he knows not where or when to look for them.*

The light of Nature can never chase away this mystery of pain, for the alleged light is itself the darkness to be relieved. If God has not revealed Himself in a clearer and more satisfying way than Reason can read in the facts of the visible world, the Divine goodness must either be abandoned, or be clung to as a mere preference of the mind, because the alternative is too terrible to be entertained.

But the existence of physical pain is a small thing in comparison with the existence of moral evil. It is easy for a Deist to echo the Atheist's laugh at the doctrine of man's fall from a state of innocency; but having laughed his laugh, the facts are still on his hands. Suppose the book of Genesis gone, and all Paul's letters to be treated as waste-paper, that only clears the ground for a more satisfactory explanation of the phenomena. In full view of the wickedness which festers visibly among the masses, and hides behind the paint and tinsel of fashion in our most civilized cities, it requires some hardihood to say, 'All things are working out a perfect order and no Divine rectification is required.'

The difficulty is not removed, as some suppose, by appealing from man's character, which is bad, to man's conscience, which discerns and condemns the badness. This discord only brings us into the heart of the mystery. Man is the highest of creatures on this earth, yet he alone comes short of his proper glory.

* 'Complete Works,' Vol. VI., p. 714. (Paris Ed. 1837.)

He alone bears the marks of violating, instead of fulfilling, his own nature. He alone has any strife about what to aim at, and what he may or may not do: and he alone has any sense of guilt or apprehension of judgment. By a singular irony of fact, these feelings of self-dissatisfaction on account of moral failure are most intensely experienced where they seem least called for, and most mournfully expressed by advanced and reflective peoples, and by the most refined and elevated individuals among them. These feelings of being out of order, and somehow discrowned and thwarted in self-rule, are the outpourings of prophets and saints, philosophers and poets. It is only where either morality or intelligence has sunk to a low ebb that they are feebly entertained.

Whence come these sentiments? What explanation can be given of this schism in man's nature? Why is it that man's actual life is such a mockery of his inward hopes and convictions, and so utterly unable to afford him that contentment which reigns among the lower animals? Is all this the fulfilment of law, or the breach of it? Is it the orderly outworking of a perfect creation which needs no correction, or is it the strife of a being at variance with his Maker?

Tracing the mischief back in thought, it becomes evident that in any case there must have been a first time when a human being said within himself, respecting some contemplated act, 'I ought not to do this thing,' and yet did it against that conviction. Whether the story of Genesis be a literal history or a veiled account of what took place in another form, the inward history must have transpired. Whether man came up slowly

from a bestial state to the human, or was made a man at once by a new creation, is absolutely immaterial to this argument. It made no difference to a Roman criminal flung headlong from the Tarpeian Rock whether he first toiled up the sloping ascent or was carried to the summit by other hands. In either case the fall was the same. So the process by which man reached a state of moral reflectiveness would not alter the practical effect of a first disobedience to the sense of duty. Similarly, it makes no difference to the problem immediately before us, whether man received some oral command from a living Person clothed in a visible form, or was only possessed of an inward light. On any conceivable supposition there was a time when man began to discern between evil and good, and when he chose the evil through some illusory idea of finding its fruit better than good. From that moment man would know what it is to be ashamed. By that one act of yielding to a transient desire against his reason, the force of passion would be increased, and self-control be diminished. From that 'first acting' of an unapproved thing, his mind would suffer 'the nature of an insurrection,' and by that one act what the Bible calls 'sin' came into the world. Let Materialists or Deists call it what they please, the act by any other name was just as bad, and being done, would bring about the history we see. Keep all theological terms out of sight. Dismiss 'original sin' to the limbo of obsolete terms. Bring forward the scientific doctrine of heredity, and the connection between the first and all subsequent wrongdoing is plain. An exact science will say that even physically man's body, the tenement

and implement of the will, must have been impaired. Habits of nerve action would be originated, more or less detrimental to the perfect sway of the will over its organized instruments; and whenever and wherever desire and conviction of duty might conflict, the effects of every previous folly would be felt in a diminished force of self-control.

So far we must all go—Atheist, Deist, and Christian alike. Those who deny a Personal God are not called upon to say anything about this primal error under its moral aspect. For them it is simply an inevitable step in the evolution of mankind. But a Deist cannot dismiss the matter thus lightly. He has been accustomed to flout the Bible as if Genesis had created its own difficulties; but now Atheists and Christians await his interpretation of this mysterious stage of evolution. We require to be told whether this was an incident the Creator intended to take place or not. We ask the Deist: 'Was man, in disobeying his own "I ought not," doing what he was created to do, or was he disobeying the will of God? Was it a part of the universal harmony, or was it a jarring note of discord, a breach of the order God designed?' If he replies: 'God intended it, and made man so that he could not help sinning,' then where is God's goodness? In that case the Creator is by admission the direct Author of the moral confusion which entered into and still afflicts the world.

But, repudiating this supposition, Deists will reply: 'No; God did not intend man to act against his sense of duty. That sense of duty was the voice of God to him, and it is so still.' This is their answer. It is the

only one they can make without denying man's moral nature altogether. But having made it, what becomes of their much-used argument against the Biblical idea of the fall? It is gone. They have admitted a first act of disobedience to the voice or will of God, and whatever the outer drapery of the story, the interior fact is precisely the same. How can this tremendous fact be said to reveal a Perfect God, whose creation needs no remedial touch and no forth-putting of His Personal Will?

We may conduct these parties one more step together. They must both admit that God foresaw what would transpire when He brought man into being. Whatever moral difficulties may be really or apparently involved in that admission, they press on the Deist with as much weight as on the Christian. The only difference between them is that a Christian has a sublime theory of redemption to offer, which at any rate professes to reconcile God's foreknowledge of evil with His wisdom, power, and goodness; but the Deist has no revelation to fall back upon. The perplexing facts which demand to be explained are his only revelation of God. He may affirm that the Christian scheme affords no light; and that is a contention which will have to be considered. Meanwhile, he has to justify these ways of God to those who protest: 'Either your Creative Being could or could not have prevented evil in the world. If He could have made a better world but did not, He is not good; if He did the best He could, then He is not Almighty.'

What is a Deist to say to this dilemma? He dare not admit defect in God, and yet if, like Voltaire, he

insists that the Supreme Being must be perfect, but allows that the light of Nature is too dim to enable the eyes of Reason to read His ways aright, his position is surrendered. By either admission all his boasted evidences of the existence and perfect benevolence of God are yielded to his opponents, and with them he is bereft of all the weapons wherein he trusted to repel the assertion of Christ, 'O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee,' and to silence the Atheist's taunt, 'Where is now your God?'

It must be confessed that a believer in God is in severe straits when driven back into his own heart for a vindication of the Divine character against the mighty chorus of accusing voices which rise up from a groaning creation. If with nothing to sustain him but the passionate cry, 'He must be good,' he can still hold fast faith in God, I would encourage him to do so by all means. I think that inner light is a true light, and one a man does well to walk by if he can find no other. I am persuaded that one who does so walk will be a better man than if he yielded up his faith to the contradictions of Nature and History. I have no wish to drive a Deist into Atheism if he will not become a Christian; but he must not affirm that Nature reveals a Perfect God simply because, when confronted with inexplicable facts, he still feels in his soul that God is good.

The straits thus far pointed out are sufficiently severe, but they do not represent the whole difficulty of the Deistic position. Monotheism has a great history. The idea of an almighty, wise, and good God is very ancient, and has been handed down from sire to son from the days of 'Father Abraham' until now. Deism

is the religion of the Patriarchs minus their faith in the personal providence and manifestation of God. But what an enormous deduction is thus made! They believed in God not merely as a First Cause of ideal perfectness, but as a personal Friend, a living Shield, and watchful Guide. Not by a cold intellectual theory, but by the energy of this high faith their lives were governed, and they attained to a dignity of character and to a sublimity of religious thought and language which have made them the most potent teachers of mankind. If Deism, therefore, be correct, we are confronted with this marvellous phenomenon. These men were right against the world in affirming the existence of One Almighty and good God, but were all either impostors or self-deluded when they said He had spoken to them by dream or oracle or sign! They were right in their conception of His Being, but wrong concerning the display of His goodness in His ways with men. All that made God a joy to them and an object of personal trust and affection was illusory; all that has made their faith a power over human hearts was fictitious, and those promises in which they rejoiced concerning the future spread of their faith among all nations—promises which are being marvellously fulfilled in the religious history of mankind —were mere vain conceits! Surely when a theory brings us into such straits as these, we may be pardoned for adopting the words of Nicodemus: 'How can these things be?'

But these unsolved problems are not the worst. Behind all that has been said there lies a grave moral difficulty which touches the character of God. Let it

be imagined that some heroic theorist has dissipated to his own satisfaction all the difficulties thus far presented: he must still be prepared to vindicate the character of the God in whom Abraham, Moses, and the Prophets trusted as their very present Helper, but who, according to Deism, really made no response to their appeals. An Almighty God must always have been able to put forth power, and to shed some light and joy upon His suppliants. But in what sense can this Almighty Being be good if He created men with such intense longings and such abject needs as the history of religion manifests, and yet withheld all rejoinder? This point will come before us under a somewhat different form hereafter; but the present chapter cannot close without insisting that the God of Deism is not good in the same sense as that for which the God of Abraham has been worshipped for so many centuries. The God who hears and answers the prayers of men, and is their Refuge and Strength and very present Help in trouble, is not morally the same Being as one who sets them in a world like this, and then sits above the circle of the earth, and leaves them to themselves while ages multiply their sorrows and aggravate their difficulties and cares. The Deist's God is one who has rigorously forborne to stretch forth the hand which made and therefore could assist mankind, in spite of all the cries and tears and agonizing longings for His mercy which have filled the atmosphere of our globe from the beginning. Like those granite sphinxes which have looked down with changeless smile on the land of Egypt for forty centuries—while cities have been built and destroyed; while temples have risen and been

filled with generations of troubled worshippers; while sepulchres have multiplied, and hot sands blown from the desert have covered ancient cornfields and broken monuments of perished glory—so the God of Deism, if that theory is true, has looked upon the earth while empires have arisen and decayed; while false religions have grown and priesthoods have thriven, and while deluded peoples have despoiled themselves of wealth, and shed the blood of enemies, friends, and children on reeking altars which attest the passion of their hearts for God. Worst of all, this stony God looked on unmoved while Abraham lived a glorious life by the power of a faith that was false in all its most strengthening and encouraging ideas; while in supposed obedience to His will a holy temple rose in Jerusalem with a hidden mercy-seat, to which the purest human hearts were drawn as an emblem of His own hidden activities and responsiveness of grace; while in the faith that He was helping and directing them, men like Elijah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah fought against the inroads of idolatry, poured out their irony upon gods that had hands but handled not, and were powerless to save; and while psalmists sounded notes of joyous praise to Himself as a just God and a Saviour, which are still ringing round the world in countless languages, making continents and islands glad. Surely the God who could gaze without response on men like these is not good in the same sense as that for which they worshipped Him, did exploits, and suffered martyrdom at the hands of an unworthy world! Such a God as this never was, and never can be, an object of confidence and love. If the existence of such a Being were once widely believed in,

the prayers of the sons of men would be ended, praise would die away into silence, contrition and thanksgiving would lapse into indifference, and indifference would pass over into a sullen pessimism, which would overcloud the world with despondency and envelop in its gloom the very throne and character of God.

In the face of man's demand for a religion which shall meet the varied needs of his complex nature, Deism is found wanting. It cannot satisfy the intellect, or appease the conscience, or relieve the heart. Between the 'no God' of the Materialist and the God of the Bible, who is believed to actually exercise loving-kindness, righteousness, and mercy in the earth, there is no faith which can survive the fiery testing of the coming age. In the great battle between these two forces, all else is being swept from the field. The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth must, as an ancient prophet said, perish from beneath the heavens and from off the face of the earth. Towards this event the conquests of science and the missions of the Christian Church are both contributing, and their failure is altogether inconceivable. No less surely may it be predicted that they will together prevail to dismiss from the thoughts and interest of mankind a God who is supposed to dwell apart in lofty disregard of human needs. When God has been driven back behind the first emission of a creative germ, and is held from thenceforth to have practised an eternal policy of non-intervention in the business of His universe, men will feel no contrition for neglecting Him who is unknown except as the Absentee Creator, the Great Neglecter of all His works.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE MYSTERY OF EVIL.

THE indictment of Nature, framed by J. S. Mill, presents the argument against God's goodness in a form to which Theism, apart from Revelation, is unable to make a satisfactory reply. We have now to see whether Christianity, if otherwise credible, is equal to the task. The issue raised may therefore be stated in the form of these two questions: 1. In what way does Christianity profess to harmonize the presence of pain and moral evil in the world with the Creator's Goodness? 2. If Christianity be on other grounds credible as a revelation from God, does its solution of the mystery commend itself as worthy of acceptance?

Throughout the following discussion, I shall purposely omit all reference to Satanic influence. Certain difficulties of a speculative kind are escaped by this means, but none which really belong to the present subject will be evaded. The alleged temptation of man by a member of another race may account for the introduction of evil into our world, but it in no way explains how evil could begin among the creatures of a Perfect Creator. It thus bears a relation to the Mystery of Evil similar to that which Sir W. Thomson's ima-

ginary meteoric stone bears to the Mystery of Life. Unable to account for the first transition from non-living to living matter on our globe, Sir W. Thomson suggested that possibly some living germs were brought here on the broken fragment of a perished world. The theory is ingenious, but it makes no contribution towards an understanding of how life began. It simply gives up the riddle as unanswerable from earthly data, and flings the inquirer into abysmal space and time to ask among imaginary worlds for information denied him where phenomena can be observed. If such an incident were provable, it would possess unbounded interest as a fact of history; but for the purposes of biology its value would be simply nothing.

So with regard to the origin of Evil. As a chapter of cosmical history the alleged introduction of evil into our world by a fallen angel is of unspeakable significance. It connects mankind with a vaster social order under the government of God, but it leaves us still to ask the same questions about the unknown race called 'angels' as we now ask concerning men, and transfers our quest to realms which are unsearchable. Nor is this the only disadvantage. If non-human actors are included in the case for consideration, we are burdened with many doubtful disputations which in no way affect the issue. It then becomes necessary to inquire whether the account in Genesis is to be read literally, or whether the serpent and the trees of testing are symbolic. If the serpent be identified with a personal devil, curiosity is aroused about his mode of being, his method of access to man's mind, the possibility of his redemption, and the historic circumstances which

brought him into social relations with man and prompted him to compass the temptation.

With regard to most of these questions, we have absolutely nothing but imagination for our guidance. The Jews believed that Satan was a good angel, the 'brightest and best of the sons of the morning,' and that as such he was sent to this world as the ordained prince and minister of mankind. But they say his jealousy was moved by the sight of Adam, and his pride aggrieved by the command to serve this new favourite of heaven. Hence the desire to ruin man was his first insurrectionary thought against God.

Milton's version of how Satan came to earth is very different, and morally, is far more perplexing. He places the angelic fall in an age far anterior to man's, and locates the event in heaven. According to his poem, Satan was—

> 'Hurl'd headlong flaming from the ethereal sky,
> With hideous ruin and combustion, down
> To bottomless perdition. . . .'

From hell the defeated rebel escaped, and, guided by Chaos, traversed the gulf of Space, and landed as a malignant invader on this globe, to revenge his expulsion from bliss by marring God's new creation.

The moral features of these two speculations are exceedingly different. But who can decide which version is the truer, or whether either bears any near resemblance to the facts? For the purposes of this chapter, however, we can afford to leave these dark themes alone. Those who rely on the statement that man was tempted by an alien foe, as a partial explanation of the earthly mystery of iniquity, are bound to answer, if

pressed, the deeper question, how the foreign tempter became evil. If, however, we accept the task of showing how evil might come into existence under the reign of a good Creator, and could be allowed to propagate itself from life to life, without reflecting blame on Him, we shall have gone to the heart of the mystery, and the interpretation of Genesis may without prejudice be left an open question, as it was left in a previous chapter. The principles relied upon in the argument which follows are such that, with a mere change of historic form, they could be applied to any race of moral beings, and are equally valid whether man was first tempted by an adversary or, without such instigation, was led away by his own desire and enticed.

At the outset of the discussion it will greatly assist the reader to carefully observe and retain in mind a much-neglected distinction between moral causes and physical or mechanical causes.* Moral causes are the reasons why things are done or made; physical causes are the forces or means by which they are made or brought about. For the physical cause of an effect, we have always to search the past. Such a cause must always be antecedent to its effect in time. But moral causes are to be sought in the 'afterwards.' They constitute the end or object for which a thing is done, irrespective of the means employed. Any intelligent being using physical means to bring about a certain result, must have in his mind some end which he proposes to gain. He may or may not communicate his intention to others:

* I use the term 'moral' rather than 'final' because it is, for the present discussion, more precisely antithetic to 'physical,' and also because the word 'final' introduces some disputable ideas.

but apart from such a revelation no one else can know what is in his mind. If his purposes are left for others to discover, they may form shrewd guesses while watching the progress of his work, but are very likely to be wrong in their surmises, and certainly will be wrong if he, being much wiser than they, is aiming at something outside their range of thought. It stands to reason, therefore, that being thus in ignorance of the worker's true purposes, these observers are not competent to judge of his methods, and will be unable to consciously assist in promoting his designs. This principle is so important, and has so many applications, that an illustration or two may not be superfluous. The late Mr. Babbage showed that a counting-machine could be constructed which would go on uniformly for an immense time, then vary, or go wrong, as we should say, once, twice, or any number of times, at given intervals, and then go on correctly as long as the materials held together. Let it now be supposed that a machine of this kind, made some years ago, has been discovered in an old-curiosity shop, by a mechanician who knows nothing of its maker's intentions. By him its general purpose as a counting-machine would soon be ascertained, and we can imagine how he would call his friends together and say to them, 'This machine is a perfect counter. You will perceive by the register that it has been counting without pause for many years; I have watched it myself for a long time, and it never errs.' But suppose, that while these words were falling from the exhibitor's lips a false number should be indicated. What a break-down it would seem! What a defect, the company would agree,

was thus betrayed! But how instantly would this conclusion be falsified if one of the company were to rise up and declare, 'I have long been in search of that machine. I have brought from my library a book written by its maker, in which he states that it was constructed to vary when it reached a certain number. You may see for yourselves on this page that the number specified agrees precisely with what has passed before our eyes.' What a complete revulsion of feeling and reversal of judgment would be produced by this revelation of the maker's purpose! When assured that the variation was foreseen and provided for, the apparent defect would be confessed a mark of wonderful precision, and the machine would be confessed a more marvellous instrument than any one had imagined before the arithmetical transgression occurred.

This counting-machine has often been used to show that certain variations of natural order called 'miracles' may be a part of that order if included in the Creator's original design, as the Christian scheme affirms. It might also be adduced to show the need for, and the value of, a revelation of God's purposes, if men are to understand His works. But I only cite it now for a more limited purpose, viz., to show that an apparent defect may possibly be a mark of perfect adaptation to some special end, and whether that end or moral cause be discoverable or undiscoverable, revealed or unrevealed, nothing is a defect in an instrument which fits it to fulfil its intended purpose.

Another illustration may further show how this principle affects our present subject. In every text-book on Logic there are a number of fallacies as well as

many sound syllogisms. There is at least one specimen of every known form in which error can creep into our reasonings. But what would Mill have thought about some juvenile critic who was verdant enough to point out these fallacies as proofs of their author's mental incompetence! If he had patience to explain, he would say to his critic, 'My dear youth, I carefully made these fallacies to teach you and other novices in the art of thinking, what dangers await your minds directly you begin to reason, and to prepare you to detect and expose similar faults in writers who might otherwise carry you captive into error.'

The application of these illustrations to our subject must be obvious. A physical philosopher examining the world, and testing it by the standard of utility, for the purpose of providing comfort and pleasure, may well say it is a bad world. But Christianity teaches us to regard the physical world as a habitation adapted to promote man's moral and intellectual discipline, rather than his mere comfort and pleasure. The doctrine of the Bible, from end to end, is that the creation was made subject to vanity in subordination to vast purposes of education and redemption. Unlike mere Deism, it does not deny or ignore any of the facts which Mill and others denounce, nor does it flinch from their discussion. There is not a groan or a curse of modern pessimism which is not a renewal of ancient murmurs recorded in the Bible. The Bible is unique, however, in pointing to man's discipline and God's purpose of salvation as explanations of the pain with which the whole creation groans. Moral evil comes later in time than physical pain and death; yet it is assigned as the moral

cause for their existence, just as death was the moral cause for which the Egyptian Pharoahs began to build their own monumental sepulchres, and even wrote the first portions of their epitaphs, while still alive to gloat over their vainglorious boasts. The explanation of vast ages of physical growth and decay on our planet can only be found in the preparation of the earth for man. Physical science teaches us that we eat our daily bread from materials stored up in the earth millenniums ago, and that without these no labour of herdsman or husbandman would be possible. Christianity preaches the higher, but harmonious doctrine, that these ages were all preparatory to the training of a mighty family in the love of goodness as better than comfort, or pleasure, or life.

The general indication of this theory brings us at once face to face with the question: Is the existence of moral evil, under any circumstances and with any purpose in view, compatible with the Divine goodness? Can man be evil, and man's Maker good?

We may get some light at this stage by observing that any reply which would cast reproach on God as our Creator would, if valid, apply in a proportionate degree to our human parents, and to ourselves, if we are parents now, or ever venture to become such hereafter. I use this not as a mere *tu quoque* argument which proves nothing, but as a fair illustration or argument from analogy, and also as a test of what our estimate of life under present conditions actually is. Pessimists, as we have seen, whether Asiatic or European, are consistent in denouncing birth as the worst of evils, and parentage, rather than murder or suicide, as the chiefest crime.

But the common conscience of mankind does not endorse this verdict. Job cursed the day on which he was born, but this was in a moment of weakness. It was, moreover, partly due to the fact that his own children were dead; and in all countries, and ages, where that old-world poem has been read, men have seen the dramatic propriety of associating Job's recovery of health and faith with the birth of a second family of sons and daughters, all of whom would have to undergo trial in their turn. We do not put on mourning when infants are born. We do not call our neighbours to come and fast and weep with us on our birthdays. These are usually glad festivals of mirth and congratulation, until old age makes them sad, as the last mile-stones on a journey towards the grave. As a matter of fact we do not regard our parents as enemies, nor should we deem it natural for our children so to regard us. Yet our parents knew we should suffer. They knew we should sin. They knew our lives would be exposed to great perils and awful possibilities. Those of us who are parents foreknew the same about our children, yet we should regard it as shameful and unnatural if they failed to love us and believe in our love for them.

It may be urged against this comparison, that human parents are not blameworthy for introducing children into the world, because they have no power to provide a better abode or to create children of another order. But to this a Pessimist would fairly reply that, inasmuch as men are not obliged to have children, their responsibility remains, and that unless our present life be better than non-existence, human parentage must be

blamable. The argument from analogy therefore does not answer a Pessimist; but it shows that unless it can be established that the Creator might have given us the advantage of our present existence, without its now attendant hardships and dangers, we can only impugn His goodness by taking sides with those who condemn human fatherhood and motherhood, and so contradict the general instincts and judgments of mankind. The argument is not supposed to be final or conclusive. It opens out a question concerning God which does not touch the case of men. But it has a distinct value because it helps to define the issue to be decided; and if we succeed in proving that the moral difficulties of our present state are those to which finite moral beings are necessarily liable, it will suffice to condemn any petulant outcry against the creation of man.

We have now to consider the question, 'Can we think of the Almighty as able to create moral beings who shall be incapable of sin?' Mill thought the only apology for such a creation as we know lay in a denial of the Creator's omnipotence; but there is no need to resort to that hypothesis. We do not deny God's omnipotence, by saying that He cannot produce two contradictory and mutually exclusive things. Omnipotence cannot create a world and yet leave it uncreated. So Omnipotence cannot create a volitional being and yet create him incapable of volitions. But directly a volitional being comes into existence, that renders every kind of conduct possible. If God dwelt alone in the universe, there would be no possibility of disobedience, or discord, or opposition. While only plants and lower animals existed on this earth His will

was not resisted. But directly a being stood on the ground, with power to choose between alternative lines of conduct, discord was possible. If man had been made incapable of departing from God's will he would not have been a moral creature any more than a star, or a tree, or a steam-engine. A creature that can only act in one way, and that the way assigned and enforced by his maker's will, may be made to go through a beautiful series of concerted movements, but then he is no more worthy of blame or praise than the ivory pieces on a chess-board when a game is lost or won. Such a being could not even see the difference between good and evil, and would remain as ignorant of the moral attributes of God as are the beasts of the field. The very word 'moral' connotes, not indeed the necessity or even the certainty, but the possibility of what is called 'immorality.' To attribute a lack of goodness to God, therefore, for creating a race liable to sin, we must be prepared to maintain that it is immoral to create a moral being.

It would carry us too far aside to fully consider an objection which may here arise in some minds, viz., that if only a free being is capable of goodness, then either God cannot be free, or, as free, must be capable of evil. This demur, like so many others, is a thing of terms. If it be answered by the admission that God is capable of evil, the words in their popular meaning would be almost blasphemous: yet in a more rigorous sense they would approach what most worshippers of God would joyfully acknowledge to be a truth. God's goodness cannot be thought of as protected by the compulsion of any higher power than His own will, or

by any force external to His own nature; yet it may still be conceived of as due to His own unchangeable but nevertheless free choice. If that choice be an unchangeable fixture of His will, the fixity is not a mechanical immobility, but may be trusted in as eternal, if on no other ground, yet certainly on this, that goodness, though not identical with wisdom, is so inseparably conjoined with it that evil implies folly. Evil, as we see it among men, is more than foolishness; but it is always foolish, and is associated either immediately or remotely with some false idea of what will prove to be for man's welfare. Unless, therefore, we can think of God as being deceived, we cannot conceive of Him as changeable in His choice. His infinite wisdom and knowledge must be impaired before He will alter a moral judgment. If, as Christians believe, there are already in another state of being 'saints made perfect,' they must still be as free in heaven as they were on earth. They are guaranteed against a renewed fall, however, by the experience through which they have been divinely led, and by the clear light for which that experience prepared them; a light into which, from its purity, nothing 'which maketh a lie' can enter. Their knowledge and wisdom are still finite, and so error might conceivably creep in, if not excluded by their faith in the wisdom and love of God. This faith, which has, in Scripture language, been 'tried with fire,' secures their glad adhesion to the Divine will throughout the new experiences which await them in their future service; and so it carries within itself a pledge that they will be as changeless as their Lord. This reference to the heavenly state is only introduced here

as a hypothetic illustration of one manner in which moral freedom is compatible with perseverance in a choice which only a deceived mind can imaginably wish to alter. It assists us, therefore, to see how the unchangeableness of God's character may be consistent with His moral freedom. By anticipation also it will be found to strengthen the statements advanced further on respecting the value of man's present moral discipline.

Returning from the digression into which we were led by the objection just discussed, it is submitted that the considerations previously advanced relieve the Creator's name from many rash and baseless imputations; but the difficulty still remains—that He foreknew that man's creation would issue in the doing of evil. Some writers have attempted to vindicate the goodness of God by denying His perfect foreknowledge. They seem to think that He would be less responsible for all that has transpired on earth, if He had not been sure that the experiment would take its present painful course. Such a theory, however, only aggravates the difficulty. It represents God as indulging in a tremendous experiment of which He could not foresee the issue: and which, therefore, might have filled the universe with hopeless anarchy and woe. If he could not foresee the first sin as a fact, much less could he foresee a satisfactory method of treating it, or a termination to human misery which would redound to His own glory. Such haphazard work would be in the highest degree culpable, and would be as incompatible with wisdom and righteousness as with perfect knowledge.

Instead of inventing a cover for our perplexity by

saying that God created in the dark, we must admit that, according to the teachings of Scripture, God created in the light—foreseeing all the effects of His work, and beholding the close of man's history as plainly as the beginning. Christianity represents God as having considered it good for man to be, good for him to pass through all we now look back upon, all we now experience, and all that still remains to be done and suffered; but it claims to set before us a sequel to the history which was present to God's mind before the world was framed—a sequel which will amply recompense our race for all its struggles, and turn the groaning of creation into an exultant hallelujah to the Lord God who hath done all things well.

We have now to inquire into the nature of that sequel to man's history, which is set before us in the Scriptures as the moral cause of our creation and subjection to vanity and trial.

In one broad sentence, we may say that Righteousness is displayed as the ultimate aim of God in creating man; and this righteousness, though infinitely higher than joy, is to have joy for its fruitage in heaven, although its roots are nourished by the salts of earthly pain and sorrow.

To appreciate this pure purpose which underlies all the most gorgeous imagery of the Apocalypse, as well as the didactic utterances of the prophets and apostles, and of Christ, we need to observe the distinction between innocence and righteousness. Innocence means simply freedom from the positive guilt of doing evil. It is a state consistent with ignorance, feebleness, and

moral inactivity. Righteousness imports the actual choice and practice of what is good. Innocence may be a standing still, or a lying down, in infantile submissiveness. Righteousness must be active, progressive and assertive of fixed determinations of the will. It is the actual going forward of a free moral agent along a true straight line, swerving neither to the right hand nor the left. A new-born babe or a newly created man may therefore be innocent, but cannot conceivably be righteous.

The Scriptures never represent man as having fallen from a state of righteousness but only from a state of innocence. They represent the first pair as without any perception of Good or Evil until a positive obligation not to do some particular thing was impressed upon their minds; and so desire and curiosity were excited, debate arose, and the difference between good and evil was found by the miserable experience of knowing they had done what they felt ought to have been left undone. It would be difficult to imagine anything more childish and primitive than the conduct narrated in Genesis, however the garniture of the tale be interpreted. That story (as shown in a previous chapter, p. 107) is as consistent with the evolution of man's physical nature from lower animals as with an entirely new creation from dust. The difficulties of man's physical evolution are physical not moral; they are difficulties of science and its teachers, not of the Bible and its expounders. The Bible version is not, as many absurdly assume, that the whole earth was a garden of Eden, or that man was created in Paradise. The general state of the earth is depicted as one of

natural untilled wildness, and from that outer wild, man was taken and placed in a prepared garden to commence his experience as a moral being. Thence again, after transgression, he was sent back to the unreclaimed land to work out his history, burdened with the mournful memory of folly, but cheered with a hope of Divine aid and ultimate victory.

Passing over the intervening history, we must now look on to the culminating visions of the Christian scheme, that the two states may be compared. In these visions we see man in a very different condition. Even in allegory he is not represented as regaining paradise, as if the starting post were also the goal of all his course. Heaven is not depicted as a primitive garden where naked creatures walk unconscious of nakedness and in infantile innocence. It is a city or social order, where the inhabitants are clothed, but in garments which are white as snow, and pure as joy, and which conceal no secret thoughts of shame. In Eden there was no crown on Adam's brow, but there are crowns of pure gold, *i.e.*, of unalloyed honour, in heaven. There may have been palm-trees in paradise, but no branch waved in Adam's hand, for he had won no victory; but every inhabitant of heaven carries this Oriental emblem of triumph. There was music in Eden—the music of singing birds and laughing waters, and the rustling of leaves; man's voice also was no doubt passing sweet; but there were no songs of praise, no intelligent adorations of Divine glory flung out into the air, no swelling harmonies of thanksgiving for goodness, no laudation of power and wisdom and holiness made manifest by Divine action to the

created mind. But heaven is described as full of overflowing worship, and resounding with spontaneous praise. In Eden we see man wandering in ignorant wonder and laying the first childlike foundations of intellectual work in the production of a spoken language by giving names to the things he saw. God communes with him in some simple way; but in all this he is represented as coming down—coming down to man's simplicity and inexperience; and of His name or nature Adam has but the vague idea of a Power higher than himself—a Power he ought to obey, and yet may possibly rival if he be bold. Of God's character, as that is portrayed in the Name given to Moses, 'The Lord, a God full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy and truth'—and as declared by Jesus, the 'Righteous Father'—Adam, while ignorant of good and evil, could have no more notion than a man born blind has of colour. To such a novice the ideas we see growing in the Old Testament, and matured in the New, were as incommunicable as the doctrine of decimals or the law of gravitation to a newborn child. The moral reflections which Milton puts into the lips of Adam and Eve before their fall may be excused on the score of poetic license, but they constitute an absurd anachronism. They are as contrary to Scripture and common sense as if he had made them to discourse under their leafy canopy on the laws of epic poetry, the advantages of republican institutions, the liberty of the press, or the right of divorce. But in the vision of heaven the people are all illuminated with exalted views of the Divine nature. They know a name of the Most High still unpronounceable in any

human language. It is no more God coming down to man, but man lifted up to God. Those worshippers have become acquainted with Him in days of sorrow and sin, and have learned by a thousand experiences to confide in His wisdom, power, and love. They have felt the misery of doubt and disobedience, and deliberately renounced the thought of doing better for themselves than God is able or willing to do for them. Their wills have not been extinguished or superseded, but have been brought by an ample experience into an eager and delightful agreement with the will of God. Hence the vision is one of perfect order, and the reign of that law of love which is the law of laws, the bond of unity, and the pledge of continuity throughout the universe for ever. It is a vision of triumph, in which Creator and creation, Master and servants, Father and children, Redeemer and redeemed, all joy and rejoice together; a vision of love purged from impurity by sacrifice, and of righteousness rendered incorruptible by the fires of a Refiner who has made a suffering world His crucible, that so the faith and love of the sons of men, more precious than fine gold, may redound at last unto his own praise and glory and honour.

It will scarcely be disputed that such a state as is thus meagrely indicated, immeasurably transcends in moral worth a condition of untried innocence. To fill many mansions throughout space with such triumphant and exalted hosts of deathless sons, must be regarded as an object worthy of an omnipotent God. Men may say it is a dream, but at any rate it is a magnificent dream. It is a dream every well-wisher of his race must at least desire that man may realize. If it be rejected,

it must be rejected as too sublime, too sanguine, too rapturous for verity. But, at any rate, it is what Christianity affirms shall come to pass; and if it come to pass, Paul will be acknowledged to have taken a sober estimate of value when he reckoned that the sufferings of this present age are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed.

It must not be concealed or overlooked, however, that, in presenting this as the moral cause assigned by Christianity for man's creation, it needs to be supported against some particular objections. It will be urged by some that they would willingly regard such a consummation as an adequate solution of the mystery of moral evil, if there were no dark background of future torment—if it could be shown that this bright future represents the future condition of the race, and not merely of a small section of it, and if further it were made plain that no easier or directer road might have been laid down for its attainment. With respect to the mystery of pain, it may also be objected, that, although man's eventual triumph would be an adequate solution in so far as he bears pain for his own good; yet the sufferings of the lower animals are not so obviously accounted for by this sequel to human history.

It is impossible to treat these vast themes adequately in this connection. Interpreters of Scripture differ in the conclusions they draw from its statements on these matters, but there are a few broad principles which are beyond fair dispute.

It will be convenient to deal first with the case of animal pain. It has already been conceded to Theists who reject Christianity that animals suffer far less than

we are apt to imagine. They are unable to discuss whether their life is worth living, and it is difficult for us to understand their position. Probably, however, their pleasures predominate over pain, and if they lack our human joys they are also free from our human sorrows, and from the agonies of moral warfare. But granting all this, the question still remains, Why the remainder of pain? Are there, according to Christian teachings, any purposes subserved by it of sufficient importance to justify its permission by a good Creator?

A volume might be written on the relation of the animals to man, and it would be easy to show that we at any rate profit greatly by their sufferings. Science has discovered that those innumerable creatures which tenanted the earth before man have bequeathed incalculable legacies to our race. It teaches that both by their living activities and their decay in death they helped to render this cooling fire-ball fit for human habitation, adorning it with beauty and storing it with inexhaustible provisions for our use. It tells us that nothing now exists in vain, but that every living thing in earth and water plays some beneficial part in the commonwealth of Nature.

The Scriptures throughout coincide with these teachings as to the subordination of animals to man's welfare; but, taking a broader and profounder view of human wellbeing, they connect these lower creatures with our moral discipline and religious education. According to the Bible the whole system of nature, animate and inanimate, is held together in one mysterious but inseparable bond of unity. The most vivid exhibition of this principle is to be found in the magnificent imagery of

Ezekiel i. There we see inanimate nature moving in mystic harmony with the animate creation headed by man. Both alike are surrounded with storm-clouds and fire, symbolic of the mystery of evil; while in the vault above there is a vision of the King Eternal. His presence seems most terrible, but His throne is surrounded by a rainbow, suggestive of the truth that His tender mercies are over all His works, and that when the storms of judgment and the fires of discipline have done their work, the whole realm of Nature will rejoice before Him in righteousness and peace. The whole teaching of the Bible is consistent with this vision. Nothing suffers or rejoices alone, or is permitted to have an isolated history. All things are declared to be for our sakes, and to be working together for the good of those who are being redeemed. Even the ground was cursed for man's sake —not in a fit of foolish and misdirected anger, as undiscerning captiousness would read the statement in Genesis, but because man needed the discipline of labour; and, as Buckle, unconsciously becoming a Christian apologist, has proved, would best have his faults corrected, and his noblest powers called into activity, by the stress of an arduous struggle to exist. In the same manner animals are represented as existing not merely or chiefly for themselves, but for man. They are given to him for food and as helpers of his toil. He is their lord, but has to contend for dominion over them, and can only prevail by courage and rectitude. They are frequently allowed to scourge his vices, and yet often share his chastisement, as in famine, pestilence, and war. Their participation in man's fortunes was pathetically illustrated

by their appointment as victims for the sacrificial altar. Their subjection with man to the Divine will and their unconscious hope in the Divine mercy were represented in the Cherubim which overshadowed the ark, as though peering into the mystery still hidden from all created beings in heaven and on earth. Furthermore, Philo did not exaggerate the functions of the Jewish High Priest, but simply called attention to a seldom-noticed truth when he observed that 'he offers the prayers and thanksgivings, not only for very race of men, but also on behalf of Nature in all her parts,—earth, water, and fire; for he regards the world as his fatherland (as indeed it truly is), and is wont to intercede for it with its Ruler, imploring Him to impart His own mild and merciful nature to His creation.'*

Passing over much that is profoundly interesting and suggestive in the prophets, we find all these ancient ideas and symbols supplemented in the teachings of the New Testament concerning the person and purposes of Christ. The doctrine of the incarnation affirms that if God subjects His creatures to a mysterious fellowship of suffering, He does not stand aloof Himself. If the Logos became flesh, as the Scriptures declare, He thereby took upon Himself our nature in its affinity to the lower animals. In His human sufferings, He became a partaker of animal pain in its broadest sense, and on the cross He tasted the bitterness of animal death as truly as the countless beasts which had previously been slain on Jewish altars. The darkness which surrounded the cross included the twofold mystery of pain and moral

* 'De Monarchia,' ii. 6, ii. p. 227. Quoted in the original by Canon Wescott on 1 John ii. 2.

evil, and whatever light of love and mercy streams out from thence must needs have power to irradiate the lower plains as well as the highest peaks of life. The cross is a revelation of God's infinite sympathy with His creatures, and it is impossible to draw a line which shall cut off its significance from any sentient portion of the world. Paul discerned and clearly expressed this principle. He saw in the cross not only a revelation of Divine sympathy, but a sign and pledge of the Divine power to deliver the whole creation from bondage to vanity. According to him nature's pain, which God in Christ descended to partake, is a prolonged travail to bring forth the new creation. It is not an expiring groan, not a long death-throe, but a coming to birth, whereby the entire creation having suffered together shall at last also rejoice together with the Lord its maker, because 'the whole creation which groaneth together until now' shall also 'be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God' (Rom. viii. 21). Nor was Paul alone in these anticipations. They are not obscurely implied by another apostle when he speaks of Christ as an abiding propitiation, not only for the sins of men, but also for 'the whole cosmos.' They are also clearly embodied in the symbolic vision of heaven in the Apocalypse (Rev. iv.). In this scene the throne of God, which Ezekiel saw above the clouds and storms of tribulation, appears in perfect brightness, and surrounded with the forms of rejoicing worshippers to whom the mystery of evil has become an open secret. But these worshippers are not only human as represented in the elders, for with them are figures which

represent the ideal unity of animated life, and these join in giving glory to God and to the Lamb, who has unsealed the books of God's strange ways, and unfolded the uses of pain, and strife, and death, in bringing many sons to glory. Furthermore, when these living creatures offer praise, the elders are said to fall down and worship Him that sitteth on the Throne, saying, 'Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honour and the power: for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they were, and were created.'

I am well aware that these thoughts are likely to start some dark and difficult questions. They suggest, but do not necessarily involve, the idea of a future life for the lower animals. Butler long ago admitted that several arguments which favour man's continued existence after death tell quite as strongly in favour of the inferior creatures, and many Christian thinkers have gone beyond that admission. My present argument, however, does not require a discussion of the exegetical or philosophical problems involved in such a view. This chapter is not concerned to prove the credibility of Scripture doctrines in themselves, but only to ask whether, if otherwise credible, they warrant our faith in God's goodness? I submit, therefore, that the statements advanced show that the mystery of animal suffering is not overlooked in the Bible: that God is distinctly declared to have subjected these creatures to whatever appears strange and hard in their lot, for wise and benignant ends; and that in fellowship with redeemed humanity, 'all things that have breath will yet' praise the Lord. It is the distinct teaching of Christianity that when man, crowned

and glorified, magnifies Him who has translated him out of darkness into light, he will offer no selfish adoration, nor will he be forgetful of those humbler races which shared his travail, but will find in a perfected creation a perpetual incitement to proclaim the goodness of Him by whom all things were made.

Turning now to the objections which relate to man's future condition, it must be observed in the first place that those notions of physical torture which used to pass current as Scriptural are gross perversions of Biblical metaphors. The combination of such incompatible things as darkness, fire, and worms proves this. Darkness cannot exist where flame is, and where flame is worms are not. That there will be tribulation and agonizing remorse hereafter for those who sin against light, is taught in Scripture: and if it were not, man's conscience would say that it ought to be. Multitudes go out of the world in such a moral condition that God could not prevent them from suffering remorse and shame, unless He obliterated memory and virtually annihilated their souls. If Christianity had taught that there is no judgment, and that the wicked and the righteous will be immediately and equally happy after death, it would have been inferior morally to some heathen conceptions. Men would have scouted as false and corrupting the idea that Nero, Caligula, Philip of Spain, and cruel wretches who make a sport of murder, should straightway be beatified together with holy women and innocent children and with valiant martyrs for righteousness' sake. The Roman Catholic torture-pit is an invention of priests, who themselves used the stake and the axe without remorse. But the Bible

view of God is that although He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, and judgment is His 'strange work,' yet that, as a righteous moral Governor, He will presently divide the evil from the good, because their commingling after death would mean a renewal of nearly all that makes earthly society a peril and a grief to well-meaning men. Strong terms are mercifully used by Christ to declare the woful consequence of resisting kindness, mercy, and moral help; but those terms are all of a highly figurative character, and they describe not created torments, but the mental sufferings of those who bemoan their misused powers, lost opportunities, and rejected overtures of love.

With regard to the numbers of those who attain to glory, Christ was very reticent. When asked about it He simply urged His questioners to strive to enter the narrow door, lest they should be shut out of His kingdom as one generation of their fathers had been shut out from the Promised Land, because too cowardly and unbelieving to encounter their opponents. He reminded them under many figures that salvation means victory, and that victory means difficulty, but that ruin means only self-surrender to defeat. Salvation means an entry into life by a door through which men can only pass one by one, because each man apart is accountable to God for his life. But ruin means a careless yielding to the surge of a pleasure-loving crowd.

This reticence of Christ's may well be accepted as an example by His servants, and is one which the apostles evidently followed. Language which seems to promise a more convenient opportunity for repentance in the next world to those who shirk its troubles now, must be

adverse to the best interests of men, and is contrary to the evident aim and spirit of the Scriptures. But the Bible does not teach as a dogma that the truth and love which were in Jesus Christ can never reach the spirits which are imprisoned in the dungeons of their sin. It was once asked of a learned theologian, who taught that man's doom is fixed irrevocably at death: 'Supposing in some far age, when you have long enjoyed the Father's house, Christ were to bring in a company of men from the outer darkness, could you look up to Him and say, "Lord, this is contrary to the words of the Bible we believed on earth"? Could you say, "That book deceived me"?' And he answered after a pause, 'No, I could not truly say that.' It was asked again, 'Do you think that any man who had been himself redeemed from evil by undeserved goodness would ever play the part of the elder son in the golden parable, if such prodigals were brought in hereafter?' Again he answered, 'No.' Still again it was asked, 'Supposing, in some manner not revealed because no part of any needed revelation upon earth, God were to overcome His last rebellious creature, and so were to fulfil the word of Paul and "reconcile all things unto Himself," whether on earth or elsewhere, should we not feel that this was a crowning glory and delight, and a fulfilment of many starry hints studded over Scripture?' Once more he replied, 'It would.'

If there are any students of the Scriptures in their original tongues, who would refuse to make the same admissions, they must be very few. It cannot be denied that readers of the English version, whether authorised or revised, may well think the language of

Scripture stronger than it really is.* It is also evident that Christ meant men to feel that by their treatment of Himself and of His words they were for all practical purposes of finite calculation making a permanent decision. The stubbornness of the human will, moreover, and God's clear resolve not to abrogate its liberty, and so destroy man's moral nature, render it supremely presumptuous to say dogmatically that no soul of man will fail of heaven at last. But, making all these allowances, it may safely be affirmed that the following propositions, given substantially in Scriptural language, represent the clear teachings of Christianity.

The love of God is for the world as a whole, and includes His adversaries, just as He teaches us to love our enemies and to do them good. The mediation of Christ is for mankind as one, although its benefits are appropriated individually. Its object is to unite all severed peoples into one, and in one body to reconcile them unto God. The desire of God is that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. The most inclusive and far-reaching words of prophecy are those which say that God's purpose is to gather together all things into one in Christ, and that Christ is to reign as King until He has subdued all things to Himself, and that then the kingdom shall be de-

* For an impartial discussion of the word 'Eternal,' see 'The Spirits in Prison,' by Dean Plumptre, p. 356. That the strongest terms used in Scripture do not necessarily denote absolutely endless duration may, however, be seen immediately by looking at the revised translation of 2 Tim. i. 9, and Jude vi. The former passage speaks of something which happened before times 'Eternal' began; the latter assigns the day of judgment as the terminus of an 'everlasting' imprisonment.

livered up unto the Father, that God may be all in all.*

If this statement of Scripture teaching be accepted as fair, and the vision it unfolds be deemed a worthy moral cause of man's creation, it may still be objected: Granting the magnificence and moral worth of the end to be gained, could not man have been caused to reach it by an easier and directer road?

The answer to this question is emphatically 'No!' Such a goal could not conceivably be reached by any shorter path. Omnipotence could not create men with the ripe results of moral conflict in their hearts and minds prior to any actual experience. There are some people who believe that the countless millions of fossils which lie embedded in the earth's crust never were living animals, but were created to simulate dead species, just as they now appear. Such a monstrous notion is plausible compared with the idea of creating moral beings as ready-made victors in a heavenly state of blessedness. God could create any number of golden crowns and leafy palms and robes of spotless white; but if these were worn by creatures who had never fought and conquered, never been tempted and delivered, the heavenly city would have no more moral grandeur than an exhibition of waxen kings and warriors. Nay, worse, it would be a created fraud, an everlasting lie. The joy and glory of the redeemed are conditioned by the fact that they have truly been in and have come out of tribulation.

Again, not only is this process essential to the result,

* For a justification of the above statements, see, amongst other passages, John ii. 16, 17; Matt. v. 43—48; 1 Tim. ii. 1—6, iv. 10; Titus ii. 11—14; Col. i. 19, 20; Eph. i. 10; 1 Cor. xv. 28.

but it is a process which must manifestly be very gradual and protracted. When once man had started on the experiment of living according to his own inclinations and desires, he was bound to exhaust every plausible scheme of utility and pleasantness, just as Christ indicates in the parable of the Prodigal Son. The father in that parable might have locked his son, as a prisoner, in his chamber, or have set his servants to watch against his departure for abroad, like the father of Gotama in the Buddhist myth. But what would have been the effect of this repression? Having once formed the wish to go, that son could never be a free and willing resident in his father's house until he had tried the far country and been reduced to say of his own accord, 'I will arise, and return.' So with the human race. It would have destroyed the whole condition of man's existence, and frustrated the final result, if God had averted catastrophes by preventing the complete outworking of any experiment, however wearisome and disastrous, before man confessed it a failure. But many of the schemes which have been devised have required ages and generations to work out. Dreams of social order and systems of thought are not ripened and found faulty in a day; and yet it is only as one after another is tried and found wanting that men are humbled to consider what professes to be the counsel and commandment of God. Hence the slow march of ages—wherein nations, religions, and philosophies rise and decline—becomes indispensable to the development of such a far-reaching purpose as Christianity ascribes to God. Human experience must needs include the mystery of lawlessness and suffering,

until the race is brought to confess as one man, 'I have sinned, and it profited me not.' 'Lo, I come to do thy will, O God! With the iron pen of my experience, Thou hast written Thy law in my mind, and Thy loving-kindness has put it into my heart. From henceforth it shall be my delight.'

The argument now nears its close. It only needs for its completeness a final statement of what has been implied all through, viz., That such a scheme of moral glorification for man as Christianity unfolds necessitates some of those alleged defects in Nature which are so often arraigned as incompatible with the goodness of God.

If men are to find out for themselves the difference between Good and Evil, it must be in a world which admits of various consequences being attached to different lines of conduct. The far country was a hard place to live in, but for the younger son it was the best possible place a father's love could have devised; and the famine, if caused by the father, would have been as great a proof of inexorable kindness as the feast spread and the music called for at the coming home; even the swine, by their repulsive grossness, assisted to drive the prodigal to arise from his animalism, and seek a more rational and spiritual life with his father. That parable contains in part Christ's explanation of the mystery of pain and want in His Father's world. If men are to learn such lessons as Christianity says we need, there must be suffering, or the nature of wrong will be concealed. The innocent, also, must often suffer with the guilty, or one of the worst natural consequences of sin, which is to injure others, must be miraculously arrested, and

so the exceeding bitterness of sin be hidden from man's eyes. Virtue must have a preponderating advantage, and must have many encouragements, or the moral judgments of men will be obscured; but virtue must often miss any outward regard or acknowledgment, and must often endure injustice, in order that the integrity of men may be tried. Mitigations of penalty, pardons and restorations, must be accorded, or every idea of amendment will be shut out, and despair become an everlasting prison-house for the race. Yet some of the temporal results of sin must be allowed to accrue even after, and in spite of, repentance, or delay in forsaking sin will lose its penalty, and moral warnings become like nursery bogies which, as children soon find out, have no existence. If men are to be lifted up out of evil, motives which they can appreciate while still in a degraded state must be afforded; and yet, as they advance, other motives must come into play which supersede the first, and shine them away through the working of a noble shame: just as we see in many Christian men, that the mere self-interested desire to escape from punishment which stirs them at the first is transformed, little by little, into a sublime aspiration to share the service and sacrifice of Christ for the good of all. In any case, man needs to have the path of transgression made hard, and the path of righteousness made steep, but not impossible; and above all things he needs to have a hope set before him to call out all his noblest powers in pursuit of the final good which God is seeking to confer. The very pledge and potency of success in such a design must consist in the reconciliation of man to the sway and guidance of

the Eternal Wisdom: and whatsoever God can do by the discipline of pain and sorrow to bring men to receive such mercies, such sympathies, and such succour as are the burthen of the Gospel, and to induce them to arise and seek the glory there held out to human hopes, must be regarded as an evidence of Divine goodness. The defects of the natural world, considered as an abode furnished for man's temporal comfort and convenience, are its perfections as a place of moral discipline; and, unless falsehood be sublimer than truth, the cross of Christ, followed by his exaltation to the throne, declares not only the righteousness of God in forgiving wrong, but also in permitting pain. The mystery of evil must remain to those who disbelieve the Christian scheme. But that mystery assuredly is solved for all who verily believe that the men whose sufferings Christ partook shall one day share His risen joy, and reign with Him as kings of righteousness over the many cities of His Father's realm. It is not pretended that any effort of thought, or any word of revelation, can at once lift our minds out of the obscurity which encompasses our path. Clouds and darkness are round about us, and the strongest faith cannot prematurely disperse the clouds, or render the darkness while it lingers as cheerful as the light to our hearts; but the doctrines of Christ are a light shining in the darkness, and they say to all who receive them that the Mystery of Evil is like the thick cloud into which Moses entered on Mount Sinai—a darkness where God is, and a darkness from which man will presently emerge with the lustre of a Divine glory on his face.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE MIRACLE OF REVELATION.

REVELATION is not necessarily miraculous. The order of nature reveals something of the mind which originated it. As Keble sings:

> 'There is a book, who runs may read,
> Which heavenly truth imparts,
> . . . . . .
> The works of God above, below,
> Within us and around,
> Are pages in that book, to show
> How God Himself is found.'

Science is a welcome pedagogue, teaching men to read that great book which existed before man invented writing, or had 'eyes to see' the wondrous hieroglyphics which abound in the heavens and on the earth. Materialism sees no revelation in nature, for she says that this great book has no author. Pantheism insists that the book and its author are the same; writer, writing, and readers all absolutely one. Deism affirms that God produced the book by creating a self-composing apparatus. According to this theory the Canon of Scripture was closed when creation was finished; and the Author never stoops to explain or supplement it, although man has blundered for so

many centuries in his attempts to decipher the letters, and still finds that many pages are written in an unknown language. Christianity declares that, in addition to this book of nature, God has spoken unto men 'by divers portions and in divers manners,' and specially 'in His Son,' 'through whom also He made the worlds' (Heb. i. 1, 2). It is her belief that many of these spoken words are recorded in the Bible, and that in them we have light and truth on matters of supreme importance, concerning which Nature is silent, or her testimony too obscure for human hearts to understand.

In previous chapters we have seen how impossible it is to read in nature a satisfying revelation of Divine goodness in the creation and government of this world. We have also seen that the Bible propounds a complementary doctrine which, if credible on other grounds, must be confessed not merely acceptable but sublime. Our business now is to consider whether the doctrine can reasonably be received as a Divine Revelation. This discussion will extend itself over the remaining chapters of this volume.

The scope of the present chapter corresponds to that of Mill's Essay on Revelation: and although not solely a criticism of that essay, its subject cannot be better stated than by a quotation from his opening paragraph: 'It would be beyond the purpose of this Essay, to take into consideration the positive evidences of the Christian, or any other belief, which claims to be a revelation from Heaven. But such general considerations as are applicable not to a particular system, but to Revelation generally, may properly find a place

here.'* It will be observed that the word 'Revelation' is here used in the special sense which involves a miracle, *i.e.*, the direct action of the Divine Will inside the realm of law; and in this chapter it will be employed in the same way.

Starting 'on the hypothesis of a God, who made the world, and in making it had regard . . . to the happiness of His sentient creatures,' Mill allows the possibility of a miracle on the ground that He who was able to create the universe 'may well be thought to have the power to modify it' (pp. 215 and 232). He also concedes over and above this abstract possibility that 'there is no antecedent improbability in the supposition that His concern for their good would continue, and that He might once or oftener give proof of it by communicating to them some knowledge of Himself beyond what they were able to make out by their unassisted faculties, and some knowledge or precepts useful for guiding them through the difficulties of life.' 'The only question to be entertained, and which we cannot dispense ourselves from entertaining, is that of evidence. Can any evidence suffice to prove a Divine revelation? And of what nature, and what amount, must that evidence be?' (p. 215).

It is important at the outset to understand the precise bearing of these questions. They do not merely affect the credibility of certain groups of miracles recorded in the Bible, but the possibility of any real intercourse between man and God. Hume truly said, 'The raising of a house or a ship into the air is a visible miracle. The raising of a feather, when the

* 'Essays on Religion,' p. 212.

wind wants ever so little of a force requisite for that purpose, is as real a miracle, though not so sensible with regard to us.'* It matters not how minute the occurrence: an event is a miracle if the usual physical causation be absent, and an effect be produced inside the order of nature by a Divine act. The smallest answer to prayer is as truly excluded by the philosophic arguments against miracles, if those arguments are valid, as the raising of Lazarus or the stilling of the tempest. Overlooking this fact, some Theists venture to sling Atheistic stones at the miracles of Christianity, while calling God their Father, continuing to pray, and rejoicing in His spiritual presence, vainly imagining that Christianity *minus* its miracles would be practically the same religion, only more easily believed. Others think to evade all philosophic and scientific difficultics by praying only for things spiritual, leaving physical benefits, *e.g.* the bread referred to in the Lord's Prayer, to be asked for by unscientific persons. This attempt, however, only excites ridicule among the high priests of Materialism. The introduction of a single reviving thought or purifying impulse direct from God involves precisely the same usage of Divine Will within the order of nature as the revelation of a moral code to Moses on Mount Sinai. The least influence brought to bear on a human mind from outside, or above the order of natural sequences, involves a modification of that order, and must be attended with physical consequences. The mere reception of a new emotion, or a quickened apprehension, or an enlivened hope into the mind, induces an

* 'Essays,' Note K, Vol. II., p. 462.

instantaneous physical change. The altered countenance of one who prays, and in his prayer obtains relief from shame or grief, indicates a countless number of molecular changes; and if it be a fact that God has really responded to the man's cry, and sent a little strength into his soul, a new force has come into the realm of natural order—a force which may work out eventually into a revolution like that of Luther, and change the custom of the world. It matters not, then, how secret or spiritual the communion; the argument from physical continuity against a miraculous revelation is gone when once the will of God has been confessed to act directly on the mind of man. The least faith in a prayer-answering God involves the same philosophic and scientific difficulties as the inspiration of a prophet or the resurrection of Christ. When a single act of Divine volition has been admitted, it can never afterwards be contended that such volitions are impossible, or on abstract grounds incredible.

The first argument claiming our attention is that of David Hume, as advanced in his famous Essay to prove that 'no evidence whatever could suffice to render a miracle credible.'* He contended that a miracle is contrary to the 'firm,' 'unalterable,' and 'uniform experience' of mankind; that this 'experience' is 'a direct and full proof from the nature of the fact against the existence of any miracle,' and that therefore 'no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle.' This argument was launched with high-sounding words of self-congratulation by its author. 'I flatter myself,' he wrote, 'that I have discovered an argument, . . . .

* 'Essays,' Vol. II., p. 109.

which, if just, will, with the wise and learned, be an everlasting check to all kinds of superstitious delusion, and consequently will be useful as long as the world endures.' Competent judges, including many who sympathize with Hume's attitude towards Christianity, have long since perceived that his argument against miracles is simply an ingenious begging of the whole question. It is, however, still lauded and repeated as if its soundness were above suspicion, and a few words must be devoted to its examination.

A great fallacy which runs through the essay may be detected in Hume's account of the manner in which his argument was conceived. He states that it was suggested to him by reading Tillotson's refutation of the Romanist doctrine of transubstantiation in the Lord's supper. Tillotson argued that the evidence of our senses is stronger than, and must be believed in preference to, any testimony. But, said he, the evidences of the Christian religion rest on testimony; consequently, inasmuch as the doctrine of the Real Presence contradicts our senses, we ought not to believe it, even if it be a doctrine of Christianity. Hume has gained fame by simply extending this argument to all the alleged miracles of the Bible. But it is singular how so acute an intellect should have failed to see that the reasoning which for Tillotson's purpose was valid, was worthless for his own. The minor premise, which is true respecting the dogma of the Real Presence in the Mass, is false respecting the miracles of the Bible. The dogma of the Real Presence does contradict our senses. The senses of every human being who beholds the Mass performed

tell him that the bread and wine show no signs of alteration—even a chemist can find no accident or property removed or added. But the Roman Church asserts that the bread and wine are annihilated, and the real flesh and blood of Christ are there instead, despite the evidences of touch, taste, smell, and sight, and in defiance of chemical analysis. But what alleged miracle of Scripture can be charged with contradicting our senses or the senses of the original observers? Were the wedding-guests at Cana asked to believe that they were drinking good wine while their senses told them it was only spring water? Was the widow of Nain asked to believe that she had her son alive again while his body lay stark and stiff on the bier? Did the disciples convulse Jerusalem by saying 'Jesus has risen,' in spite of the production of His mangled and decaying body by the rulers and priests? Clearly not. These miracles, as they are described to us, all appealed to men's senses as witnesses of the phenomena; and the difficulty felt by sceptics in regard to them is the exact opposite of that which Tillotson urged so successfully against the doctrine of the Mass. The Christian witnesses say that certain marvellous physical phenomena appeared to them which no known physical causes could produce. The Romish Church says, 'There are no physical phenomena to be observed, but in spite of that a physical change has taken place.'*

* A Roman Catholic may urge that if a miracle can be wrought to produce exceptional phenomena, it can also be wrought to effect a change of substance while the accidents remain. A variety of points are raised by this contention which belong exclusively to Protestant polemics. It may not, however, be superfluous to re-

A second fallacy in Hume's essay is equally palpable. He avers that miracles are contrary to experience. But we inquire to whose experience are they contrary? To Mr. Hume's? Yes; but not therefore to all mankind's. How then are we to know what the experience of mankind has been? Evidently only by recorded testimony. But what portion of mankind has left us any testimony on the subject at all? Certainly only a small portion, although the individuals are numerous. Have, then, any of these witnesses professed to have seen miracles? Most certainly, for that is how most of them were induced to testify on the subject at all. Manifestly, therefore, before we can affirm what the uniform experience of mankind has been, we must consider the worth of this testimony and decide whether it be good or bad. This is the conclusion arrived at by Mill, who says that, 'All the evidence alleged in favour of any miracle ought to be reckoned as counter evidence in refutation of the ground on which it is asserted that miracles ought to be disbelieved. The question can only be stated fairly as depending on a balance of evidence.'

Having reached this point, we might perhaps claim

---

mark that such a view presupposes the existence of miracles, and can in no way affect the force of the argument against Hume. If miracles are wrought upon substance without affecting accidents, they lie outside the range of sense perceptions, and consequently of human testimony. If believed in at all, they are the objects of a faith which not only asks no support from the senses, but can survive their contradiction. Hume's mistake was that he confounded two radically different classes of alleged miracles, as pointed out in the text. Not a sentence of what he writes respecting the teachings of experience or the value of testimony has the slightest relevance to miracles of an invisible order.

that the way is sufficiently cleared of *à priori* objections for an unprejudiced discussion of the evidences relied upon by Christianity. We have Mill's admissions, that, (1) Given a Divine Creator, a miraculous revelation is possible ; (2) if He cared at all for His creatures there is no antecedent improbability against His making such a communication; (3) the question is solely one of evidence; (4) this question cannot be closed by such dogmatic assertions as Hume's. But notwithstanding these admissions Mill seeks to find logical room for two further contentions: (1) That the actual evidence adduced in favour of alleged miracles having been wrought is insufficient; (2) that there is a vast preponderance of probability against such a direct action ever taking place.

It will be observed that the first of these contentions raises a far larger issue than Mill announced in the opening of his essay. It arraigns the whole of those 'positive evidences of the Christian' religion which he expressly excluded from treatment. Whether his acquaintance with Christian apologetics was sufficient to qualify him for the task of discussing them may well be doubted. As a matter of fact, however, he does not discuss them in any of his essays. The value of these particular evidences will hereafter be submitted to examination, and the adverse opinions casually expressed in his Essay on Theism will be dealt with as more fully expressed and sustained by other writers. Declining all excursions, therefore, beyond the boundaries assigned for this chapter, we shall consider only his remarks on the general worth of evidence in relation to alleged Divine acts.

His general position is 'that Divine interference with nature could be proved if we had the same sort of evidence for it which we have for human interferences' (p. 228). Near the commencement of his essay, he writes very distinctly on this point. 'Taking the question from the very beginning,' he observes, 'it is evidently impossible to maintain that if a supernatural fact really occurs, proof of its occurrence cannot be accessible to the human faculties. The evidence of our senses could prove this, as it can prove other things. To put the most extreme case: suppose that I actually saw and heard a Being, either of the human form or of some form previously unknown to me, commanding a world to exist, and a new world actually starting into existence and commencing a movement through space, at his command. There can be no doubt that this evidence would convert the creation of worlds from a speculation into a fact of experience' (p. 217). He anticipates the sceptical objection that the appearance might be no 'more than an hallucination' of his senses, but, admitting the possibility that the senses may be deceived, he urges that there are various precautions which may be taken, and draws the practical conclusion: 'When the evidence, on which an opinion rests, is equal to that upon which the whole conduct and safety of our lives is founded, we need ask no further. Objections which apply equally to all evidence are valid against none. They only prove abstract fallibility' (p. 218).

This passage is of great importance. It shows that we are foolish to demand evidence of a surer kind than our human faculties are capable of supplying. It admits

that the spectators of a superhuman event would be justified in trusting to their own senses, and it leaves the way open for a discussion of the question, whether we are also justified in trusting to the testimony of those who say, 'We have seen such events.' This is precisely what Mill perceived, for his next paragraph introduces the question of human testimony. In the midst, however, of the discussion of this topic, the trustworthiness of the senses is impugned in a remarkable passage which, to all but very subtle intellects, will appear a contradiction of the words given above.

The passage now to be quoted occurs directly after the admission that a Divine interference with nature could be proved if we had the same sort of evidence for it which we have for human interferences. Its object is to destroy the value of that admission by showing that such evidence must always be lacking. 'When the human will interferes to produce any physical phenomenon, except the movements of the human body, it does so by the employment of means: and is obliged to employ such means as are by their own physical properties sufficient to bring about the effect. Divine interference, by hypothesis, proceeds in a different manner from this: it produces its effect without means, or with such as are in themselves insufficient' (p. 228). Therefore it is urged, 'Supposing even that the event, supposed to be miraculous, does not reach us through the uncertain medium of human testimony, but rests on the direct evidence of our senses; even then, so long as there is no direct evidence of its production by a Divine volition, like that we have for the production of

bodily movements by human volitions' (p. 229), so long the hypothesis of Divine volitions is incredible.

This has been much admired as a piece of close and powerful reasoning; let us judge it for ourselves. Observe, first of all, that to point the contrast between Divine and human volitions it is affirmed that God uses means, if He uses them at all, which are 'in themselves insufficient,' but man uses means which are 'by their own physical properties sufficient.' But the question arises, Does man use means which are in themselves sufficient to produce the effect? Are any implements employed by man to effect his purposes in external nature 'sufficient by their own physical properties' to produce their desired effect, apart from the volition which uses them? If so, we should be glad to make their acquaintance. Will a lancet open sore flesh unless used by man? or will a sail set itself to catch a sea-breeze? or a gun by its own 'physical properties' direct and propel a shot? The question of the sufficiency of means largely depends on the force of will and the degree of wisdom possessed by the person who employs them. With a common pen-knife some men could carve a better model ship than others could make with the best tools ever invented at their command. The word 'sufficient,' as applied to means, is a purely relative term, and it is relative not only to the effect required, but also to the power and skill of the being who employs the means. Therefore, if God can produce effects by means which would be insufficient in man's hands, it only shows that He is mightier and wiser than man, but in no case, human or Divine, can means be called insufficient, if they really suffice for the

production of the required effect, and in neither case are the means used 'sufficient' in themselves or 'by their own physical properties.'

Observe again the singular distinction set up between the movements of the human body by the will and the production of any other physical phenomena. We are invited to assume that in moving the body the will uses no physical means, while in every other case it is compelled to employ them. But what are the facts? In the first place the will never uses any external physical means or instruments except by and through some movements of the body. When Mill wrote that sentence, he used perhaps a quill; but the said quill had first to be taken hold of by a hand, and never formed a letter except as guided by the writer's fingers. The blacksmith, perspiring at his task of shaping iron on the anvil, would gladly use his ponderous hammer without the fatigue of moving his arms. The seamstress, stitching garments with aching eyes and trembling fingers, would most thankfully ply her needle by a calm exertion of the will. But, alas for toiling humanity! the will has no power to produce any physical effects, or to employ any physical means, whether small or great, except through and by the prior means of moving some portion of the body.

In spite of Mill's mysterious slip of thought, therefore, we are driven inside man's body to discover how the will operates. Here again we are compelled to point out an inexcusable assumption of what is manifestly incorrect. We are invited to believe that, in producing movements of the body, the will employs no physical means. To what extent is this true? It is not true of the hand, for no man, author or smith, can use his

hand to wield an implement without setting in motion a considerable amount of physical machinery. Let a few nerves and muscles be cut in the arm, or a bone be broken, or a joint dislocated, and the strongest will can neither close the empty fingers nor grasp a hammer or a pen. Step by step we trace the machinery of the body back to the brain cells. There at last, but only there, we find physical phenomena produced by the will without the use of any intermediate physical means. Whatever the ultimate effect to be produced, whether within the body or out of the body, whether to write a book, steer a ship, build a tower, or only to snap the fingers, the will operates in the same way. There is absolutely no distinction, and the subtle argument based upon the assumption that man's will operates in two different ways is a logical castle in the air.

Having cleared our minds of this confusion, we are free to take the value of Mill's admission, 'that divine interference with nature could be proved if we had the same sort of evidence for it which we have for human interferences.' The case, therefore, stands thus. Apart from testimony, we have two sorts of evidence for human interferences:

I. We have the evidence of consciousness which each man possesses that his own body is moved by an effort of his will. This order of evidence never can be producible for a Divine act of volition. If at any time God works a miracle, He alone can be conscious of performing it. If myriads of men or angels were to witness the creation of a new world in the manner described by Mill, they would not have the same kind of certitude that we have about our own volitions.

This, however, does not weaken the force of any evidence for miracles, because the objection applies with equal force to the evidence of the smallest human action that can be witnessed.

II. Apart from the evidence of consciousness or testimony, we have, also, for human interferences with nature, the evidence of inference, and that more or less 'speculative inference.' We have 'direct perception' of phenomena produced by the volition, but never of the volition itself. If I see a man stabbed immediately before me in broad daylight, I can only infer a human volition. The evidence adduced in cases of wilful murder is always inferential, even when it is not what is called 'circumstantial.' My senses report to my intellect the observed phenomena. Reflecting on these, I am compelled to infer that they have a real cause, and the only cause I can conceive is that the body I see at work is moved by an invisible will like to that of which I am conscious, but which no man can see in me. This is the sole evidence I can obtain of any human will interfering with nature. It is generally accounted valid. The world passes on its way regarding it as sufficient. Men are hanged on the strength of such evidence. Wars are waged, families dwell together, and business is conducted in the faith of it. To disregard it would involve an absolute cessation of human intercourse, and drive us into the old Hindoo jungle of calling the universe an illusion. Yet the evidence for a Divine interference would be of a similar order. If I beheld a new world created as Mill describes, I should only have the evidence of my senses for the outward phenomena and the super-

human volition would be an 'inference.' If Mary really stood by the grave of Lazarus and saw her dead brother arise, her senses would render precisely the same service as when she saw him buried a few days before, and they would be neither more nor less trustworthy in the one case than the other. Any objection against the evidence in this or similar instances on the score of its being only 'inferential' would apply to 'all evidence' whatever. The justice of an inference must in all cases be open to consideration. No one would contend that every conclusion to which an incautious mind may leap is to be accepted as valid. But the question now before us relates not to a concrete case but to the qualities of evidence in general and in particular to the value of an inference *per se*. In the case supposed by Mill, he admits that the true inference would be that a Divine volition had taken place, and thus unwittingly allows the sufficiency of inference in a conceivable case. If he saw a dead man raised from the grave he would probably make the same admission. The actual occurrence of either event would be an object of direct perception, and the inference drawn from it would be an act of the reason. It is insisted, therefore, that the reason must be called upon to decide in each particular case as to what inference is to be drawn from observed facts, and no *à priori* objection can hold good against any such conclusion merely because it is an inference. Such an objection would force us to doubt the existence of the world, the reality of any action done for us by a mother or wife or child, and so would reduce thought itself to a lying dream. We fall back, therefore, again on Mill's twofold admis-

sion, that 'divine interference with nature could be proved if we had the same sort of evidence for it which we have for human interferences,' and, 'when the evidence on which an opinion rests is equal to that upon which the whole conduct and safety of our lives is founded, we need ask no further. Objections which apply equally to all evidence are valid against none. They only prove abstract fallibility.'

We advance now to consider the value of human testimony as evidence of a superhuman interference with nature. Granting that we should be justified in trusting our senses as already ascertained, it is obvious that such evidence can seldom be available. The world wants to know whether it is entitled to credit the reports of ancient events, such as are recorded in the Bible. Here again it must be remarked that the examination of particular testimonies is reserved. We have now to deal with the prior question raised by scepticism. Can such testimony ever be accepted?

In estimating the value of testimony, it is necessary to distinguish between the phenomena attested and the inference drawn. Testimony, strictly speaking, can never transcend the evidence of consciousness, or of the senses. The senses, as we have seen, cannot discern a volition, therefore no testimony can directly prove one, unless it be given by the person who exercised his will. All we can ask of a witness is that he will accurately report what he perceived. When this is done, we are in a position to draw an inference ourselves. We may often have to repudiate an inference as unsound, while accepting a statement of facts as

true. Indeed, we not unfrequently use the facts related by a writer to discredit his inferences.

Keeping this distinction in mind, it will appear that human testimony is at least as trustworthy as the evidence of our senses. In the present day, we have learned to correct the evidence of our senses as to matter of fact in countless instances by accepting the testimony of other observers. We deny the witness of our eyes that the sun rises and sets, yet how many of us have personally made the observations which prove our eyes mistaken? The facts of geology and astronomy, and indeed of all the natural sciences, are received for the greater part on testimony. Indeed, the amount of knowledge obtained by any one man's senses is infinitesimally small in comparison with what he credits on the evidence of his fellows. If a sceptic should contend that 'all men are liars,' he would be obliged to base even that assertion on testimony.

Of course it has to be admitted that we may be deceived by testimony as well as by the senses. Our witnesses may have been under some illusion, or they may have intentionally borne false witness. But then we are entitled to transfer to this kind of evidence what Mill so justly admitted about the senses. There are well-known precautions which may be taken to test the veracity and discretion of a witness; but in the majority of cases testimony, and not the senses, is 'all that we have to trust to.' 'We depend on' it 'for the premises' of our reasonings in physical and historical science, and in all the relationships of life. Upon the strength of it justice is administered, not by eye-witnesses of crime, but by

impartial judges, who are rightly trusted to sift the evidence adduced. If the fallibility of testimony be urged as an objection against the reception of evidence, we may fall back, therefore, with confidence on the sound dictum already quoted twice. 'When the evidence on which an opinion rests is equal to that upon which the whole conduct and safety of our lives is founded, we need ask no further. Objections which apply equally to all evidence are valid against none. They only prove abstract fallibility.' The testimony of witnesses who profess to have seen occurrences which can only be explained by inferring a Divine act of volition, is of precisely the same order as that which we have for human actions. The testimony which would satisfy in the one case cannot on abstract grounds be held insufficient in the other; while of course the right or the duty of trying the soundness of any inference from the phenomena must in all cases remain.

It may be conceded that our argument thus far is logically valid; and yet an impression remain that, as practical persons, we ought to regard testimony for extraordinary events with more caution than is considered necessary in ordinary affairs. This is quite just. If a man's life were in question, a counsel would cross-examine witnesses with more severity than if the issue at stake were a trifling sum of money. Where the truth of a religion is concerned, therefore, no pains can be too great, and no care excessive in weighing the evidence before us. It is, however, quite as important that this care should be taken before the evidence is rejected as before it is accepted, for a

hasty denial must be at least as evil as a rash belief.

Holding these views, I shall now ask the reader to consider the weight of probability for and against a Divine revelation before proceeding to examine the case for Christianity. Mill's admission that such a revelation is not antecedently improbable has been cited. In spite of that admission, however, he contends that, judging from an observation of the Creator's actual works and ways in nature, there is a great preponderance of probability against such an event taking place. 'Assuming,' he observes, 'as a fact the existence and providence of God, the whole of our observation of Nature proves to us by incontrovertible evidence that the rule of His government is by means of second causes; that all facts, or at least all physical facts, follow uniformly upon given physical conditions, and never occur but when the appropriate collection of physical conditions is realized. I limit this assertion to physical facts, in order to leave the case of human volition an open question: though, indeed, I need not do so; for if the human will is free, it has been left free by the Creator, and is not controlled by Him either through second causes or directly, so that, not being governed, it is not a specimen of His mode of government. Whatever He does govern, He governs by second causes' (p. 233).

Observe first of all the peculiar manner in which the analogy of the human will is set aside. 'If the human will is free, it has been left free by the Creator, and is not controlled by Him.' So far we must yield our assent. Taking the word 'controlled' to mean—as of course it

was used to mean—coerced, the sentence is a mere platitude. But note how that word 'controlled' slips out and the word 'governed' is introduced in a subsequent clause, as if it meant the same thing. Not being controlled it is not governed, and so is 'not a specimen of his mode of government.' But why were these words interchanged? The word 'governed' is far wider than 'controlled,' and is consistent with the reign of one free agent over other free agents, which 'controlled' is not. Would the champion of political liberty say that a nation is not governed unless it be despotically controlled? In a political treatise he would have flayed an Imperialist author who dared to confound such different terms. He would have asserted indignantly that one of the clearest and best marks of good government is that it does not withhold liberty. In any country where he found personal freedom established, he would regard that fact as one of the most significant specimens of the prevailing mode of government, and would contrast it with the absence of freedom elsewhere. The governing of a free people is, indeed, the greatest function of all moral rulers; and the ability to wisely guide other wills without crushing them by fear or force is the mark of a heaven-born governor of men. All analogy therefore teaches us to say that the freedom of which we are conscious, and which no metaphysical subtleties can eradicate, is about the most important indication of God's method of government which could be named, and it cannot be cast out of our argument by such an unpardonable substitution of the word 'govern' in the conclusion of a syllogism for the word 'controlled' in the premises.

President Lincoln once observed in homely language that it is not wise to 'swop horses when crossing a stream.' It is often found a great convenience, however, to change terms in getting over a logical difficulty.

Keeping the human will in reserve for use whenever needed, let us turn our attention to the argument as limited to 'things physical.' Strictly speaking, it is nothing but Hume's argument served up again under a different colouring of words. 'The whole of our observation of nature proves to us by incontrovertible evidence that the rule of His government is by second causes.' 'All physical facts follow uniformly upon given physical conditions, and never occur otherwise.' What is this but Hume's 'uniform experience,' renounced in the previous paragraph as an unwarrantable assumption, but instantly reproduced? The question raised by such language is properly one of fact, not of probability; but we may judge from the close of the paragraph that Mill used the words 'the whole of our observation' to mean the observations of modern men of science and men of the world, and that he intended to set the uniformity of their observations against the testimony of any professed witnesses of miraculous events. Protesting against such a lax use of words on a subject so supremely demanding clear thought and speech, it has still to be insisted that when the pronoun 'our' is thus limited to scientific observers and men of the world, the statement is incorrect. Science, as we have seen in previous chapters, is perfectly familiar with physical facts which had no such antecedent physical conditions as are generally observed to be necessary. The total quantity of energy in the uni-

verse is declared to be perpetually the same, but to be constantly tending towards lower forms of activity, and so towards an ultimate condition of stable equilibrium. There was a time when this energy was in a maximum condition of activity. How then was that maximum reached when the law of nature is for it to decline towards a minimum and to become nil? Mathematics prove the facts, but natural laws, as at present known, can give us no hint respecting the physical antecedents of that maximum of kinetic energy. Coming down to things less remote, the first particle of living matter was a physical fact without the now invariable antecedent condition of previous physical life. This first bit of bioplasm must have proceeded from not-living matter, either by creation or by evolution, *but in either case* the now invariable physical antecedents were confessedly not there. We are told that not more than 12,000,000 years ago the earth was too hot for animal or vegetable life to exist upon it. According to any theory of progress, what millions of physical facts must have come into existence in that period without the now usual antecedent conditions! From whatever point of nature we start in our observation, science leads us up by inexorable steps to a point where the so-called 'appropriate collection of physical conditions' was demonstrably absent. The weight of scientific observations therefore which Mill strove to put into the balances against the probability of an event ever happening without these conditions, falls from his hand, and by a righteous retribution it drops into the other scale.

The most forcible argument ever framed against the

probability of a miracle being wrought is that based on the doctrine of continuity. It is insisted that any break in the continuity of nature must tend to confound man's mind, to confuse his calculations, and render uncertain the operation of those forces which, if variable, would destroy confidence and security in action. For example, if to save the life of a saint the law of gravitation were superseded, it is asked, How could we reckon on that law in building or walking or for any other purpose? If the sun were stayed in its course, how could astronomers ever again calculate the motions of the solar system? Would not all the ordinances of time be disturbed, and the truth of all our knowledge of past and future ages be rendered doubtful?

This plea is very weighty, because it involves a moral consideration. It deals with the world not merely as a machine, and in the spirit of a mechanic, but in the spirit of one who believes the universe the domain of a God who is not only living, but true, and is faithful in all His works. It is certainly incredible that He who made us will ever do anything to undermine our trust in the reign of law. He will never make the universe speak an untruth to our intellects; and we may lay it down as an axiom that, should He ever exercise His will in a direct manner, He will so do it as to promote truth and confidence among His creatures, and not so as to confound them.

But what does this mean, and to what conclusions does it conduct? Does it mean that God cannot exercise His will without producing error in our thoughts? Does it mean that, having set worlds in motion, He must leave them to go on in monotonous

sameness for ever, lest His creatures should be perplexed? If that be so, the facts of the world do not correspond to such an expectation. These facts scarcely indicate that the Creator intended us to have no uncertainties about the physical conditions and environment of life. It rather appears that uncertainty is the law of our being; so that literally we cannot tell what a day or an hour may bring forth. Who can tell whether to-morrow the earth may not open under his feet and swallow down the city in which he dwells, or fire descend from the clouds to consume his house, or winds sweep away his ships, or disease cause his calculations to fail and his plans to perish? Even in the matter of time, man never has had anything but an approximate degree of accuracy, and calculations on which life and property depend are frequently baffled by inexplicable events. Whatever took place when Israel fought against Amalek, it is certain that since man began to watch the heavens, suns have been stayed in their course, and some day, unless perchance a miracle be wrought, all the measurements and calculations of time in this solar system will assuredly come to grief. Already the word 'day' means double the duration that it did once on our globe. Every day we live, the earth takes a little longer to revolve upon its axis than it did the day before, and should it fall into the sun, as many anticipate, all the time-tables of Jupiter, and the other planets of our solar system (if these still exist), will suddenly go wrong.

But is God, then, the author of confusion because of these things? Clearly not. They can only be held to prove Him the Author of an order too vast and complex

for man's mind to master. If from some intellectual altitude we could survey the events of 'eternal times' in their relative proportions, as we see the events of days and hours: if we could comprehend in our glance the history of worlds as we now survey the growth and decay of cities and families, all apparent exceptions would no doubt fall into their places as parts of a sublime order; and those events which are fitted to baffle our intellects and confuse our calculations as children of a few days, might be recognised as the striking of the clock of ages, marking off measured periods wherein millions of years are as one day, and the life of a world as a watch in the night. Of all this I entertain no doubt; but its true significance is that the universe is not so constructed, and its operations are not so restricted, as to be always clear and certain to man's mind.

Things that are usual and ordinary to one who measures epochs by ages, will appear breaches of order when they happen within the observation of one who measures time by minutes and months, and whose memory stretches only over a few brief earthly years. If we were acquainted with some millions of worlds, it might appear that variations of method, such as we call miraculous, occur at intervals in the educational progress of innumerable races of moral beings, and that they are parts of an invariable order for the universe, although exceptional in the experience of each race apart. But, whatever may be thought of this supposition, it is surely idle, while we dwell in the midst of so many mysteries and incalculable processes, to contend that a few exceptional events, whether brought

about by natural laws or by direct Divine volitions, would appreciably affect the certainty of our knowledge. Especially must it be vain to allege that such events would exercise an unfavourable influence on our sense of security in doing work or taking rest, if we regard them as Divine acts wrought for our moral and intellectual enlightenment, and to promote faith in the personal care of Him who made the heavens and the earth.

These considerations are fitted, at least, to weaken the force of the argument from continuity against the probability of a miracle; but that argument may be turned round to show a high degree of probability, almost the moral certainty, that the God who made mankind will continue to exert His will directly in their affairs. Jesus Christ proclaimed the sublimest law of continuity when He said that the heavens and the earth should pass away before one jot or one tittle of God's will for moral beings should be annulled. And again when He said, 'My Father worketh until now' (John v. 17). These statements are not offered here as authoritative revelations of fact. We are not entitled to so employ them in this argument; but the most sceptical may bestow upon them the same respectful attention as they would give to words spoken at a meeting of the British Association. Considering them, therefore, in this light, we have a marvellous doctrine of continuity: a continuity of Divine activity which never pauses and never varies in its purpose, whether making worlds or causing them to perish; a continuity which is never broken by any treatment of the physical universe, however remarkable, which subserves the

discipline of moral beings, and so supports the administration of unchanging and unchangeable Moral Laws. This is the only doctrine of continuity ever propounded that covers all the universe in space, all eternity in duration, and includes the moral history and discipline of mankind. A miracle involves no breach, even of physical continuity, if all events are thus viewed as the outworking of Divine energy. Physical continuity is preserved throughout the most erratic and extraordinary actions of men, because man's will, though not a physical cause, is a recognised and constant cause of physical changes. So if miracles are understood to be the production of a Divine will which is always at work, the mere variation of the phenomena, or the order of phenomena, leaves continuity unimpaired.

On the other hand, a marvellous breach of continuity is involved in the theory that God worked as the Creator by the forthputting of His will, but then straightway ceased to work at all! It admits that for a certain time He was actively engaged in operations upon matter, producing molecules and setting them in motion, and appointing the laws of their combination. He was so minute in His care that He provided for creatures man's microscopic instruments cannot discover, and put these things—millions of which may live in a drop of water—into endless relations with suns and systems and with man's happiness and welfare. Having done this, we are asked to believe that He ceases to touch matter any more! Is not this a breach of continuity! It involves so complete a change of character and of relation to the substance of

the cosmos, that the God of solicitude and care revealed in creation is not the same Being as the God who holds aloof for evermore!

When we come thus to apply the doctrine of continuity to the ways and character of God, a multitude of considerations arise.

Creation involves duties, just as parentage does, but of a far more onerous and urgent kind. True, there is no being higher than the Creator to enforce them by penal sanctions. But the Highest must be one whose nature spontaneously rejoices to do all, and far more than all, that any inferior nature can recognise as right. On such a point as this, not only the intellect but the heart is entitled to be heard, and the verdict of our hearts is clear. The mother who bears an infant is not just to her child when she casts it on a doorstep to struggle for existence, to perish or survive. What, then, would be the character of One who made such a being as man and then left him to struggle unaided on this 'stony-hearted stepmother,' the earth? Here is a being with a will which can operate within the realm of physical order. He can so obey natural laws as to command nature with increasing kingliness; he can apply her forces to the most diabolical purposes; he can set forests on fire with two bits of stick; he can poison springs, and pollute rivers, and explode mines; he can torture animals, maim and lacerate his neighbours, and put an end to his own earthly existence. All these things he can and will do; but God, who has produced this volitional being, is supposed to say, 'I will no more do My own will on earth'! He has worked to produce, but He will not work to put

bounds to this creature's excesses, to overrule, to teach, or to reconcile this rebellious and terrible being to His wisdom and goodness. Such an abdication of governing powers as is thus assumed would involve a crime against Himself and against His creation. If God were capable of such abandonment, there would be an awful impeachment in Job's cry of reproach, 'Thine hands have framed me and fashioned me together round about; yet Thou dost destroy me' (Job x. 8). How much sublimer, and how much more consistent with continuity, is the faith which is breathed in David's song, 'The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever; forsake not the works of Thine own hands' (Ps. cxxxviii. 8).

We may now take one other step, and see how highly probable this renders it, that God, if always working and sustaining all things by the same will which made them, should at certain periods so exert His will as to reveal both the fact that He really is at work, and the spirit and purpose of all His ordinary operations.

We have agreed that the Author of Nature will not confound our intellects. But, if God be always acting, does not the appearance of unbroken uniformity in physical Nature become a source of illusion and untruth to men? Tennyson sings: 'God fulfils Himself in many ways, lest one good custom should corrupt the world.' Is there not a profound suggestion here? If there be such a God as we have seen reason to believe, one long custom might deceive the world into thinking there is no Worker at all! In spite of all the alleged miracles

of revelation, and the inexplicable events observed by science, men do infer the non-existence or the non-activity of God from the measure of uniformity they perceive. Would it not tend to cure this confusion of mind if God condescended to work a miracle of self-revelation? If continued life be the law for all human beings, would not a visible resurrection remove a false inference drawn from the general uniformity with which bodies remain in their graves?—would it not be corrective of some disastrously false calculations based on the supposition that death makes an end of all, and that there is no judgment to be looked for hereafter? If kindness be the law of God's treatment of men, would not a few visible samples of His mercy assist a true faith in danger of being confounded by the prevalence of disease? If active sympathy with man be the real condition of God's mind, would not the revelation of such sympathy in a personal form be the dissipation of a false impression derived from the non-appearance of any superior Being to care for the inhabitants of a mechanical world? If, in spite of all human sin and misery and apparent failure, God is working out a plan which will bring in everlasting righteousness, would it not promote that result, and remove an intellectual confusion which is fitted to paralyze man's moral endeavours, if God were to grant a special disclosure of His purpose, and were to afford, by works no human might could perform, some illustration of His own power to us-ward, and thus indirectly also some assurance that the message was no cunningly-devised fable, but a true word from Himself, and worthy of universal faith?

Of course these are all advanced as suppositions, not as dogmatic assertions. But this in no way lessens their logical force for the purpose in hand. We started in this chapter on the hypothesis of a beneficent Creator, and have recorded Mill's admissions that on this supposition it is neither impossible nor antecedently improbable that He will use His power to enlighten His creatures and assist them in the difficulties of life; and that the question whether He has done so is solely one of evidence and cannot be disposed of by Hume's summary method. Reserving for separate discussion the particular evidences of the Christian belief, we have examined the worth of evidence in general, and have found that no objections can be sustained against the value of testimony in the case of an alleged miracle which do not 'apply equally to all evidence,' and that, therefore, none are valid. The last difficulty raised by philosophy is an allegation of improbability based upon an observation of the Creator's usual ways. This improbability has disappeared under examination, and we have seen on the contrary that such a revelation as was not antecedently improbable is highly probable, and morally necessary if the Creator's goodness is to be sustained. It is submitted, therefore, that a Christian who believes that God has spoken, entertains a faith which can only be shaken by direct evidence of untruth in the witnesses who have given their testimony to the world, or by such credible explanations of the phenomena they attest as shall suffice to set aside the inference drawn by the witnesses themselves, and accepted as reasonable by a large portion of mankind.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE ORACLES OF GOD.

For those who assent to the conclusions already reached, some of the main difficulties which hinder faith in the Bible as a treasury of Divine oracles are removed, and libraries of hostile criticism are deprived of their chief force. Many writers of high repute regard it as an axiom on which all criticisms must be based, that narratives which imply the possession of more than human knowledge, or the occurrence of events above the normal course of nature, are either to be explained away or denied.

Renan, in his 'Life of Jesus,' brushes the whole question aside by asserting, 'That the gospels are in part legendary, is evident, since they are full of miracles and of the supernatural' (p. 8). In his 'Apostles' he is equally dogmatic, declaring that 'it is an absolute rule of criticism to deny a place in history to narratives of miraculous circumstances' (p. 27). In the same autocratic spirit Strauss only devotes two or three pages to the statement and vindication of the fundamental principles on which his work is based. His main contention is that 'it is the problem of historical investigation, not merely to discover what has really taken place, but also the mode in which one thing has been caused by

another. But History must renounce the latter most honorable part of her problem the moment she is ready to admit the existence of miracle, interrupting, as it does, the causation of one thing by another.'* He will hear no man's testimony, for, 'allowing the witnesses the best character,' he declares 'it is absolutely impossible to conceive a case in which the investigator of history will not find it more probable, beyond all comparison, that he has to deal with an untrue account rather than with a miraculous act' (p. 200). To justify this attitude of invincible incredulity, he affirms that 'all philosophical theories, in so far as they lay claim to the name of philosophy, are agreed.' For Materialism and Pantheism, he justly observes, such things as miracles are impossible, because neither admits the existence of a God above nature. With regard to Theism, he concedes that: 'We might be almost inclined to suppose that miracles would seem conceivable and admissible to Theism with its personal God, separate from the world. In fact, this theory has popular forms which might also admit the possibility of miracles;' but he ventures on the remarkable assertion that, 'whenever it appears really as philosophy, it has always shown itself irreconcilable with miracles' (p. 198). Passing lightly over this point, he proceeds to rest his case on Hume's argument, of which he says that 'it carries with it such general conviction, that the question may be regarded as having been by it virtually settled' (p. 199). J. S. Mill was scarcely a preacher of 'Popular Theism,' but we have seen his criticism of Hume's argument, and his admission that on the

* 'New Life of Jesus,' Vol. I., p. 197.

Theistic hypothesis a miraculous revelation is manifestly possible, and not antecedently improbable. We have also given reasons for an advance upon this admission, and for concluding that such a revelation is in the highest degree probable. We have also seen that if otherwise credible, Christianity presents a scheme of moral government which is well worthy of acceptance. We are, therefore, free as rational beings to acknowledge the presence of Divine oracles in the Bible, if its utterances commend themselves as from God.

### *Section I.—The Place of a Book in Revelation.*

At this stage it may be advisable to offer a few thoughts on the fitness of a book to be an instrument of Divine revelation.

Our observation of the Creator's usual methods, and the special importance that seems to be attached to the independent, industrious, and faithful employment of man's powers, does not favour the expectation that God, in making Himself known, will dispense with the use of our mental faculties. What man can do for himself, God evidently requires him to do. It is by this labour he lives, and by this struggle to live that he grows in wisdom and strength. God will scarcely work miracles to show what can be found by seeking. As our Teacher, He will surely adapt His methods to the education, *i.e.*, the drawing out, of our natural talents, and will make our success as learners of truth to be conditioned by this progress.

This principle, which, as distinct from its application, will scarcely be disputed, affects both the amount

and the manner of the revelation we may expect to receive. Whatever is necessary for man's education over and above the things which are written in the conscience or are discoverable by the reason, God may be expected to impart. What these things are has already been seen in outline while considering the Christian scheme in relation to the Mystery of Evil. Paul defines them very beautifully as 'the things of God,' which none knoweth 'save the spirit of God' (1 Cor. ii. 11). He institutes a comparison between these 'things of God' and 'the things of a man,' which none knoweth 'save the spirit of the man which is in him.' Apart from some revelation, we know nothing of what is passing in the consciousness of our fellow-men. Their countenances manifest a little, their works declare much more, but often these are inscrutable, and are grievously misunderstood until motives, intentions, and affections are explained by words. Without these words our greatest undertakings would become as impracticable as the tower of Babel, and social life would be impossible. If this be true with regard to human relations, must it not also be the case between men and God? His works in nature declare much of His mind, but history shows how wofully men misread them, and we have seen how even the wisest and best fail to gather from them a conception of God which can satisfy either the intellect or the heart. We see a little of what God has done and of what He is doing, but we cannot read the Why; and while ignorant of the purposes which lie hidden in the Creator's mind, we are unable to appreciate His methods, or to cheerfully submit to His discipline, much

less to co-operate with Him in the execution of His plans. Most reasonably, therefore, may we expect that He who made man as a social and conversational being will by some means speak to His creatures, and whisper the great secret of His eternal counsel so far as to render duty clear, and to bring those who hearken to His voice into a trustful and reverent relationship with Himself.

As to the manner in which this communication will probably be made, it is only possible in this place to speak in the most general terms. In a world where everything is done by 'little and little,' we could not expect to have a complete revelation written in heaven and sent down to this earth in its entirety, nor, as we have recognised, could such a communication have been understood. If God speaks to men it must be as a father reveals knowledge to his children, giving them 'here a little and there a little,' as their mental powers develop, as their advancing experience supplies them with language and ideas, and as their growing needs require. As to the vehicles for such communications, we can conceive of many that might be employed, and need not here discuss their nature. The question of present importance is, Should we expect God to give a separate and direct revelation of truth to each individual, and so to each generation afresh; or is it more reasonable to suppose that truth, once introduced into the realm of human knowledge, would be intrusted to man's stewardship as the permanent property of the race? If we adopt the latter alternative as immeasurably the more reasonable hypothesis, the questions arise, By what means can this knowledge be

preserved? How may it best be handed down through time, and spread abroad over the nations? How may it best be guarded against the risks of forgetfulness, perversion, and suppression? How may it most suitably be kept so as to allow of additions being made from time to time, and of eventual distribution among all people, so that each may have at his command the garnered wealth of ages?

The answer which best satisfies all these questions is supplied by our common experience. Knowledge may be best preserved and diffused by putting it in writing. There are only two methods that can be named. Either oral tradition must be relied upon or there must be written documents. Unless a miracle of tongue-tying be wrought on each recipient of knowledge, tradition will be busy. But if this be the only mode of transmission, what risks of extinction must be run! And if these are overcome, what corruptions will ensue! What lapses of memory, what softenings of unwelcome doctrine, what misstatements of things imperfectly understood, what additions of things deemed expedient or desirable, will occur! But written documents, if not immaculate at first, or altogether incorruptible by copyists, may, as we know, abide in substantially the same form for centuries, and continually be available as a standard whereby oral traditions may be tested, and thus be 'profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction.' What mischief tradition can work in a religious system may be seen in the Romish Church of the Middle Ages. What services written books can render is apparent in the Protestant Reformation, which, by appealing to the original

sources of information concerning the doctrines and practices of the Primitive Church, set up what appeared in Europe like a new religion. This illustration is equally cogent whether Christianity be true or false; for there can be no dispute that those who possess a copy of the Bible have at their command a knowledge of the facts believed, the principles accepted, and the practices adopted by the founders of this religion.

It would furthermore appear, from the principle laid down, that a book containing divers communications from God would be likely to contain much that might be produced without a miracle. To be comprehensible, such Divine oracles would require to be accompanied by some account of the circumstances attending their delivery; and if we can learn a little about the men who received them, and the part they played in history, the value of their message will be enhanced. It must also be unspeakably valuable to know how the Divine messages were treated by men generally; how it fared with those who believed, and with those who denied or rejected them. The thoughts of good men concerning these oracles, and the accumulated witness of successive generations to their wisdom, goodness and truth, as tested by experience, would all be precious. The varied forms into which the original truths might be cast for practical purposes at different epochs; the laws formed upon them, the devotional literature to which they gave rise; the controversies they provoked; and the manner in which commandments were enforced, promises fulfilled, obedience justified, and faith rewarded—all these and many more subsidiary matters

which no miracle would be needed to supply, might worthily be incorporated in a divinely-provided book. These human portions of it would all be revelations, though not strictly speaking Divine revelations. Their subject-matter and their authorship would alike be earthly, although closely related to the Divine, and if God inspired men to serve His purposes by their composition—if, furthermore, He so appointed their order, and so overruled their collection, as to furnish mankind with a book which He deemed adequate for the preservation and diffusion of His oracles, as a series of progressive revelations, and sufficient for all purposes of religious instruction—then, notwithstanding many human elements, it would be a God-given book, and might more truly be called Divine than human. Thus, although, as Mr. F. W. Newman discovered, history is not religion, yet religion may have a history; and that history may become invaluable as at once the illustration, the commendation, and the verification of oracles presented to us as having been spoken of old time unto the fathers.

### *Section II.—The Method and Spirit of Inquiry concerning the Bible.*

Our business must now be to inquire whether we have reasonable grounds for believing that the Bible is thus a God-provided book. In prosecuting this inquiry I propose to take up the volume without assuming the correctness of any theory concerning it. Many Christians object to this method as wanting in due respect for what they unfalteringly affirm to be the Word of God. They demand that the Bible shall be

treated in an exceptional manner, not only by those who are already convinced of its supernatural origin, but also by those who are in the stage of inquiry. It is, however, as unreasonable for a Christian to ask a doubter to instantly assume that the Bible is Divine, as for a sceptic to require him to assume that it is not. Until a conclusion has been arrived at on adequate grounds, the only wise course is to examine the Bible with all attainable impartiality. If, as Christians believe, there is a more than human wisdom in its lore, the result of investigations thus conducted with an open mind, or, as Paul might say, with an 'unveiled face,' must be to make its unique glory more apparent.

But while we thus approach the Scriptures as inquirers, I may be pardoned for insisting that even the most sceptical should do so in a spirit of reverence. On merely literary grounds they are entitled to our profoundest respect, because, as many irreligious men of genius have confessed, they stand alone in the world for originality and wealth of thought, for sublimity of diction, and for splendour of imagination. None but cold or careless minds can regard without veneration a volume which has such a history as the Bible, even apart from the history it contains. It is a spring at which nations have been drinking for thousands of years. When we read its pages, our eyes are fastened on words which have thrilled the souls of millions, causing them often to tremble while they hearkened to the reasonings of Apostles and Prophets concerning righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come; kindling repentance, inspiring hopes, enthralling the reflective in hours of meditation; impelling peoples and individuals to heroic

struggles and sublime sacrifices, comforting their hearts in sorrow, and shedding light upon 'the way to dusty death.' As we ponder its thoughts, we learn the forces by which many of the noblest lives have been inspired, and the most triumphant departures out of life have been sustained. To treat this book as a common thing were to prove ourselves insensible to what is sanctified by the purest and loftiest memories of our race, even for those who hold it sacred in no higher sense. As we uncover our heads at the portal of an ancient temple, where myriads have bowed down, and where the ashes of many sages and mighty men lie buried—and as we do this without pausing to ask whether their creed and our own agree—so, to take the very lowest ground, it must become us to open with reverence a volume which enshrines the most precious remains, the spiritual relics, of many of the truest princes and chiefs of mankind, and is hallowed by ancient association with the worship of a multitude which no man can number.

*Section III.—Some Elementary Facts respecting the Bible.*

Approaching the Bible in this spirit, what do we find? A brief inspection ascertains that, although bound as one volume, it is a collection of books written by different authors at remote periods, and that it comprises the most varied kinds of composition. Here are histories, laws, dramas, lyrics, proverbs, biographies, political manifestoes, moral discussions, public and private letters, and visions of things to come, in heaven and on earth.

The volume is divided into two main sections, called

Old and New Testaments: the more ancient portion having been composed for the most part in Hebrew, and the newer part in Greek. Each book is cut up into chapters and verses, but these are only a modern device for convenient reference. The chapters are also provided with brief headings of contents, but of these all are modern, many imaginative, and some grotesque. Some of the books have no author's name attached; to others names have been prefixed on probable or traditional grounds. In the margins we find figures, some giving the supposed dates of the events narrated in the text, and others the dates of authorship. But these again are modern, and form no part of the original documents. Pursuing our inquiries about these dates, we find great differences of opinion among good authorities, but that within certain limits no controversy can be raised. The latest book of the New Testament, viz.: the Gospel according to John, was, by universal consent, in existence in the middle of the second century. The greater part of the New Testament was in existence before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Regarding the Old Testament, we learn that its contents had all been translated into Greek, and were read in public throughout the Roman Empire, at least a hundred and fifty years before Christ, the great subject of the New Testament, was born. The oldest traditions ascribe some of these writings in their present form to Moses, who lived about B.C. 1500. Some modern critics assign them to a much later date, but it is agreed that they contain documents which must have been in existence before the time of Moses.

Without dispute, there are Psalms dating from over 1000 years B.C., and prophetic books ranging from about 800 to 400 years B.C. We may therefore leave an immense margin for debated questions, and say, without risk of challenge, that the composition of the Bible spreads over a period of more than a thousand years; a period as great as that which divides us to-day from the kingship of Alfred the Great.

### *Section IV.—The Unity of the Bible.*

Let us now inquire: Is there any real unity in these books? They are bound together as one work, and in this form have been translated into more than two hundred and fifty languages. Is this a mere freak of fortune, or is it due to the perception of a vital connection between the many parts?

In the first place, they have all been produced by Hebrews, *i.e.* by men of one race. This alone would not justify or account for their combination, but if they are united in other respects, it becomes a most marvellous phenomenon, for no ingenuity could compile a book, with any semblance of unity, out of any other national literature, taking the compositions of thirty or forty authors who wrote very nearly at the same time; much less if they wrote at distant intervals through a period of a thousand years.

Furthermore, the binding together of these many writings has not been effected by national pride, or even by men of the Hebrew nationality. One small section of the race, tinged with Gentile blood, broke away from the main stock several centuries before Christ, and only accepted the first five books. The

Jews, as a people, have never received the New Testament, which they view with detestation. Its contents were really brought together, and added to the Old Testament, by foreigners; the canon being discussed and settled by councils in which many nations were represented. The Bible, therefore, is a national literature, but its apparent unity has been perceived and maintained by foreigners for nearly two thousand years, and against the protest of the nation which produced it. Clearly this also is a fact unique in the literary history of the world.

What, then, are the chief elements of unity which men have found by study, or felt instinctively to be present, binding this library into one organic whole?

These books are all one in their views of God. There is progress in the clearness and fulness with which His many attributes are displayed and His various relations expounded, but the earliest ideas of God contain in outline and suggest by implication all that follow. From first to last He is the same self-existent, perfect Being, who pities His creatures as a father pitieth his children; who chastens them, yet is slow to anger, ready to forgive, pleased to hear their prayers, wishful to encourage hopes of good things to come. There are separate passages and incidents which many think incompatible with this character, but all we have to observe here is that these alleged inconsistencies are not confined to the earlier books, as some writers assume, and so do not affect its unity. The God who sent fire to Sodom is the God whose terrible judgments on nations and cities are announced by Christ, and portrayed in the awful symbols of the Apocalypse.

The God who suffered Israel to conquer Canaan when the land had become intolerably wicked is the God who threatened to send His Roman servants to destroy Jerusalem, and cast the Jews forth from their ancient heritage. This is a fair specimen of the way in which the alleged defects of His ways discovered in the Old Testament are recited and repeated in the New. Goodness and severity, righteous mercy and merciful chastisements, are marks of the Divine character, as represented consistently in the Bible from age to age.

But not only do the Hebrew writers of the Bible agree amongst themselves while opposing all the world in their idea of God, but they are one in their mode of putting Him before us. They never indulge in philosophic discussions about His Being. Where men like Socrates labour to prove and toil to confirm by abstract doctrines of probability, they proclaim. They speak as men having authority, and not as the scribes of their own and the sages of other lands. The first verse in the Bible does not even affirm the Divine existence, but simply says, 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,' and this quiet way of telling a known fact pervades the books throughout.

These writers see and regret Atheism and all kinds and degrees of scepticism, but they speak with strong assurance as the intimates of God. They tell forth His alleged mandates and promises, and deliver His oracles with the accent of men who have come straight from the King's presence. They all speak with dignity as from above, and talk of the heavenly realm with as much calm assurance as if it were their native land.

Another mark of unity and of singularity in the Bible is the view of human nature which pervades it. All through its pages man is represented as a sinner. He is not only charged with doing wrong to his fellows, but every wrong deed is regarded as a personal offence against God. From first to last the Bible is true to this doctrine. Some of its alleged moral defects are simply marks of inexorable fidelity to this first principle. It paints many portraits of good and great men, and holds them up as in some respects model characters; but apart from its statements about Christ, it never makes an exception to the verdict, 'There is none righteous; no, not one.' The choicest characters, such as Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, Peter, John and Paul, are all depicted as men of like passions with ourselves, and their gravest faults are written down, without abatement or excuse, just as if the writers were recording angels.

On the other hand, bad men are never depicted as monstrosities. Their worst crimes are treated as extreme symptoms of the great epidemic; but the wicked are no more vituperated as inhuman than the best men are worshipped as ideal heroes or spotless saints. None are so good as to need no repentance; but none are too bad to be forgiven if they repent. The discussions of Paul on the inner strife of man disclose a philosophy of human nature which, although never previously expounded, is never violated by the author of any one of the many histories, biographies, laws, proverbs, prayers, hymns, and predictions which are spread over the literature of previous centuries.

Another sign of unity in the Bible is the reamrkable

manner in which the later writers deal with the earlier. No author seems to have apprehended that he was composing an integral part of a great volume; and yet something fresh is continually being added which comes between the older and newer parts, not as one lifeless stone is laid upon another stone in a building, but as the new wood made by a living tree comes between its earlier and later growths. Primitive promises reappear in often varied forms, but unchanged in substance. Laws become the burthen of confessional psalms, and promises the inspiration of praise through successive generations. The lives of elder worthies adorn and vivify the words of counsel spoken to their posterity. Historic judgments are used again and again as warnings against familiar crimes. Prophet quotes prophet and carries on the vision. Christ quotes Moses and the prophets as witnesses to Himself. Apostles quote the Old Testament at large, and with freedom; bring out unnoticed meanings in antique words and rites, and show in clearest fashion the persistent purpose and changeless continuity of God's method.

This opens out another mark of unity, on which volumes might be written: viz., the development traceable throughout the Bible and its teachings. The unity of doctrine is not that of a monotonous and unprogressive sameness, but like the personal identity of one who passes through childhood, youth, and maturity. The Name of God, as proclaimed to Moses, could not possibly have been communicated to Adam in his primitive childish innocence; for the words in which it is couched are such as derive their meaning

from centuries of moral discipline; and yet that Name which describes His nature as 'full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger, plenteous in mercy and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgressions and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty,' is a Name which implies all those views of man's lapsed condition which are exhibited in the records of primeval life. The Sermon on the Mount could not have been spoken on Sinai; or if uttered would in great part have been meaningless. Yet it is equally true that that discourse could not have been uttered unless the law of Sinai had preceded it and been long in use. Every careful reader may see that Jesus was speaking to the slowly gathered experience of ages; and that, while clearing away many vain traditions which, like moss overgrowing an ancient inscription, had concealed the writings of Moses, He was also bringing out a deeper meaning than the great lawgiver had seen in his own precepts. The spiritual doctrines of the New Testament are largely conveyed in terms which were slowly created by ritual worship in the temple and by the events of Hebrew history. Some of the most beautiful and instructive sayings of Christ are the transference to Himself of Old Testament imagery; *e.g.*, where He likens Himself to bread from heaven, His doctrine to running water, His leadership to the light of the cloudy pillar, His body to the temple, and His death to the uplifting of the brazen serpent. The whole story of the Exodus becomes a storehouse of metaphor and trope to depict the soul's escape from bondage: its committal to Christ as guide, captain, and provider; its manifold

temptations; its protracted journey through a land of sense which affords no spiritual food; and its final entry into the fatherland beyond the flood. These are only a few typical specimens of the manner in which the spiritual is developed out of the natural, and of the way in which tales of tedious trial and discipline open like flowers of unguessed beauty when the light of fuller knowledge streams upon them in later books.

Out of many other marks of unity noted for use, only one can now be stated, viz., that the books of the Bible taken altogether present a coherent conception of the past and prospective history of the human race under the Divine government. The point here remarked upon is not the sublimity of the scheme, nor its adequacy to solve the mystery of evil; but the marvellous unity of the Bible, as a progressive unfolding of this magnificent ideal by different writers, scattered over many centuries. It opens with a book of origins, it closes with a book of destiny. The intermediate pages show the human race toiling and fighting through sins and doubts and fears, and until the latest books are added, the enigma of life remains unsolved. The Old Testament without the New, is like an unfinished drama, or a half-told tale. It is as clearly imperfect and in need of supplement as the Pilgrim's Progress would have been if Bunyan had only conducted Christian to the Valley of Humiliation, while describing him as bound for the Celestial City. The Jews themselves confess their sacred volume incomplete, and have waited nearly two thousand years for a sequel less offensive to their tribal vanity than the New Testament presents; but other peoples see that

the very features of the New Testament which render it most obnoxious to Jewish pride are its highest title to acceptance with mankind. Christ, as depicted in its pages, burst the ripe husk of Judaism; the chosen nation died that it might no more abide alone, but rise up a nation of one mind and spirit, wherein earthly divisions of country, tribe, and language shall be as nought, and so become a universal kingdom, into which all the kingdoms of this world may be gradually absorbed under the spiritual monarchy of the Prince of Peace. The Jews are opposed to this ideal, but the world confesses, if not the truth, at least the logical unity and dramatic grandeur of those visions of Patmos, which gather up the symbols of the Old Testament and link the sorrow of Eden, the midnight dream of Abraham, and the dynastic hopes of David, with the eternal joy of redeemed humanity before the throne of Him who keepeth covenant and mercy for ever.

These marks of unity in a volume composed by so many authors, living so far apart in time and under such dissimilar conditions of political, literary and social life, are very difficult phenomena to account for; and certainly never have been accounted for as yet, on the supposition that no Higher Mind presided over the work. Taken by themselves, they afford a body of evidence which grows upon the mind in value the more carefully it is considered, but their chief importance can only be seen in conjunction with some other facts which have yet to be established by the application to the Scriptures of some further tests.

*Section V.—The alleged Verbal Infallibility of the Bible.*

At this point two main courses are before us. We may take the claims put forward by many Christian advocates, and test the Bible by the standard of Divine infallibility, or we may take the estimate of many opponents, and try it by the standard of possible human excellence. In the one case we ask, Is it all Divine? and then the discovery of a few discrepancies of statement, or other signs of human infirmity, will be fatal to its character. In the other case we ask, Is it all human? and then the discovery of even a few marks of superhuman knowledge and wisdom will establish the fact that it contains at least some Oracles of God. This second test involves also a subsidiary question as to the general credibility of the Scriptures, in so far as they treat of earthly things and are within the province of human knowledge, and thus are capable of comparison with other sources of information.

If we were compelled to confine ourselves to the former of these tests, the case would soon be closed. It is obvious that, whatever may be claimed on its behalf, the Bible does not represent that all its own contents are of the same value and authority, or that every sentence is an oracle from God. It is only in theory that this is ever misunderstood. The writers often confess their own doubts and fears, and sometimes their reluctance to be employed. They lay bare their frequent faults and errors, and tell how these were Divinely corrected. When the writers of the New Testament quote from the Old Testament, they seldom do so with literal exactness. Sometimes they

cite the Hebrew, giving their own translation, sometimes they use the Septuagint version, but often they give a free rendering of the substance, and occasionally weld together sentences or clauses from different authors.

Studying a book like Job, it is at once manifest that the author never wished us to read it all as God's word. It is full of contradictory views of Job's character, of the causes of his calamities, and of the Divine method of dealing with men. Vehement arguments and invectives are launched against one another by five different men, and the whole discussion is concluded by a general rebuke administered to the speakers by the Almighty for their unwise talk. At the close we see these five men offering sacrifices to God for the sins they had committed in their speech; clearly, therefore, to quote as Divine oracles the utterances for which they were reproved, and of which they thus repented, is to do the most flagrant violence to the book. It is to take for 'bread' what the author has plainly labelled 'stone,' and for an 'egg' what he has exhibited as a 'scorpion,' whereby Job was almost mortally stung.

The most cursory examination of various other books will compel any untrammelled reader to recognise the marks of human imperfection. Different accounts are given of the words written at Sinai on the stone tables of the law. Parallel histories in the Books of Kings and Chronicles contain discrepancies of detail which no ingenuity can reconcile. The four gospels combined present a more lifelike and impressive image of Christ than any one apart, but they transpose the order of some events, connect the same words with different incidents, and even in relating the institution of the

Lord's Supper give the words of Christ in slightly varied forms. The student can find what Christ did on this occasion, and what He meant by the service, but sticklers for formulas cannot ascertain the exact words that were employed.

Apart from these manifest departures from verbal exactitude it is notorious that neither the Old Testament nor the New is now possessed by the Christian Church in precisely the original text. Thousands of variations have been tabulated in the ancient manuscripts. Nothing but a miracle of creation could now furnish an infallible version, unless, indeed, the original documents are somewhere treasured up for future use, as the Jews say that their ark lies hidden in the unknown grave of Moses. Most emphatically, then, it must be allowed that the claims advanced by some of the most impassioned champions of the Bible cannot be substantiated. Tried by the standard of verbal infallibility, the Scriptures are found wanting, by all who venture to use the same private judgment in this case as is recommended to Roman Catholics with respect to the claims of the Pope and to the doctrines of the Church over which he presides.

It cannot, however, be conceded that the failure of the Bible to bear this test proves that it does not contain oracles from God, or is at all damaging to its credit. The detection of human errors and contradictions in the official utterances of the Roman Pontiff is conclusive of the papal controversy, because his infallibility has been authoritatively asserted by a General Council, presided over by himself. The case of the Bible is different. It nowhere claims to be infallible, and

neither friend nor foe has ever shown that such an attribute is an essential mark of a book of Divine instruction, or even that it is a thinkable or possible thing. Many considerations tend, on the contrary, to show that such ideal faultlessness is antecedently improbable, and indeed almost inconceivable. To secure such a supernatural result in a work composed through human agency, and in a form presentable to fallible and ill-instructed senses, would involve far more miracles than the boldest advocates of infallibility have ever claimed, and far more than we can imagine a wise God caring to perform. To produce such a volume it would be necessary in the first instance for God to create earthly languages whose signs should perfectly represent heavenly ideas, and then, not only to dictate every syllable to the first writers, but to mechanically control them in the execution of their task, and in the same way to govern every copyist, every translator, and every expounder. If the actual acceptance of the exact letter were indispensable, He would still further need to guard miraculously each separate man, woman, and child of all the millions to whom the Bible comes, against mistakes of hearing, reading, quoting, recollecting and understanding. An infallible text, indeed, would fail of its supposed design unless complemented with infallible eyes, infallible tongues, infallible ears, and infallible intellects among the children of men. Surely no 'rational sceptic' will insist that the absence of such a series of useless and unnatural prodigies precludes the hope that God has made some communication of thoughts and purposes to his inquiring creatures!

But the strongest objection on this point proceeds not

from sceptics, but from Christians; and their difficulties, which are rather practical than theoretical, must not be left unnoticed. These difficulties arise from an unalterable conviction that the fine gold of truth is stored up for men in the Scriptures, coupled with a failure to see how Divine truth can be commingled with the least alloy of human error, if it is to be serviceable to mankind. Myriads of Christian men and women have in their own experience an evidence which nothing can shake that the great doctrines of the Bible are true. They testify that their faith has been verified by actual experiments. They have acted on the belief that there is a correspondence between themselves and an unseen friend, and have not been disappointed. They are more certain of this experimental evidence than of any speculative opinions, and in such well-founded confidence every believer in Christ would encourage them to continue. Nothing written in these pages, rightly understood, can tend to weaken that faith: on the contrary, the separation of faith, in Him of whom the Bible bears witness, from an indefensible opinion about the Bible, can scarcely fail to afford a sense of liberty and strength not previously enjoyed.

The practical difficulty which disposes so many good men to insist on the verbal infallibility of the Bible finds expression in such questions as these: How can we draw the line between the words of God which are in the Bible, and the words of men which are mixed up with them?—If human defects and errors are once admitted, who can tell whither that admission will lead?—How can readers take up the Book for guidance and instruction with any confidence, unless it be all alike Divine?

It is much to be regretted that such objections as these have been pressed by many prominent and honoured teachers of Christianity. Their effect is in many respects lamentable. They offer an unintentional provocation to a scarcely candid treatment of the 'Word of God.' They are intended to protect the teachings of Scripture from destructive criticism; but they no more do this than a box of cedar will preserve gold from the action of fire. On the one hand, opponents see the manifest weakness of such appeals to fear, and attribute to the thing defended the same weakness as they detect in the materials of defence; on the other hand, those who have been taught that they must believe in the verbal infallibility of the Bible or else reject it utterly, are driven into a terrible dilemma when the facts already admitted in these pages are forced upon their notice. Unless their accepted teachers are wrong, they must either renounce what appears the most precious thing on earth, or close their eyes to sundry features of it which can no more be denied than the spots in the sun. A little patient boldness, however, may suffice to neutralize this mischief, and to show that the admission of human imperfections in the Scriptures no more unfits them to be the joy and guide of life than spots in the sun impair its claim to be the light of the world we inhabit.

As a matter of fact, whatever theories Christian people hold, they do distinguish between Divine and human words when reading the Bible. A simple Scottish woman, who has been taught from infancy that it is equally and alike Divine from Genesis to Revelation, and who believes that doctrine so firmly that she would

rather die than learn to doubt it, still finds that some parts have a diviner power than others. In reading Paul's epistles, she notices with intelligent respect that in some places he speaks expressly as 'by the Lord,' and at others, 'as a man;' and she finds no difficulty in valuing the former passages more highly than the latter. When reading the gospels she has no difficulty in distinguishing between the words of Jesus Christ and those of the Tempter in the wilderness, or those of the Scribes and Pharisees, of Herod and Pilate, and the common people. It never occurs to her, when reading those gospels, to treat any but Christ's words as if they were Divine oracles. If by a consistent but preposterous application of her theory she were blinded to these glaring differences, she would sometimes be guided by Christ, sometimes by the opponents He refutes, and sometimes by the disciples whose crudities He corrects.

What is done instinctively and almost unconsciously, in such obvious cases as these, needs to be done all through the Bible; and clear-eyed souls will seldom find the process very hard. The professed oracles of God are generally unmistakable. For the most part they are introduced in ways no child need fail to understand. 'The word of the Lord came to me'—'Thus saith the Lord'—'And God said'—these and similar phrases abound. Sometimes the writer describes the manner in which the message came—as by dream, or vision, or angelic messengers. The Bible thus bears upon its face the evidence that it is not only a record of oracles received from God, but also an account of the manner in which men received them, and of how

the world treated these men and their messages. It is avowedly the history not only of Divine commands and promises, but of human faith and obedience in conflict with human unbelief and disobedience. It preserves not only the words of God's servants, but those of His worst adversaries. It reports the delusive sophistries and lies of Satan, the sneers of scoffers, the falsehoods of impostors, the delusions of the superstitious, and the doubts and inconsistencies of saints. It treasures up for our study not only the thoughts which are declared to have been in God's mind about man, but the thoughts which have seethed in human breasts concerning God, and life and death, and things seen and unseen. It sets before us the denials of Atheism and the blasphemies of the wicked together with the confessions, entreaties, and thanksgivings of the holy. It is this variety of contents which gives it universal adaptation to man's needs. Men of all characters, temperaments, and grades of culture find their natures mirrored in these pages, and are presented with some oracle given of old to meet whatever stage of experience they have reached. It is not merely, therefore, that the Bible is not lessened in value as a book of Divine counsel by a frank recognition of these many human elements, but its full use and value only becomes evident when these are carefully observed. Any theory which fails to account for them must necessarily tend to perplex its readers. To derive instruction, correction, and guidance from the Bible, we need to have our eyes open and our hearts alert, in order to judge concerning any sentence whether it be of man or God.

Those who have never read the Bible with a clear

recognition of this duty will find by experiment that it becomes a book of new glory and worth. How often do Christians feel perplexed and morally shaken in reading portions of the Bible because they find actions related and sentiments expressed which, found in any other book, they would condemn ! In the Psalms they come continually upon passages which strike them painfully as revengeful and cruel. It is all supposed to be God's word, however, and so the moral judgment is suspended, and thereby enfeebled and confused. Perhaps a notion is adopted that what was morally right under the old dispensation has become wrong under the new ; but by such a view God's changeless character is impugned to save the honour of his word. But if the Psalms are read as in part God's word to man, and in part man's words uttered to God, or poured out as meditations in His presence, the conscience is cleared for action, and finds a wondrous field for moral and spiritual exercise. It cannot indeed be pretended that the study of the Bible presents no difficulties when the presence of human elements has been confessed, but only that its most serious difficulties are removed. It is full of difficulties. It is a book which millions have studied for many years, and for its exposition libraries have been written in many languages ; yet still the greatest students feel themselves but novices. But in all this the Bible is the counterpart of Nature, which the proud, the indolent, and the rash can never understand, and which even the most childlike, indefatigable, and careful students can only learn by degrees, and by often reconsidering the conclusions which once seemed final. But unless the words of

Christ are false, there is a Guide and Teacher who will aid the humble and sincere seeker after Truth. Christ declared that if any man wills to do the will of the Father, he shall know at least one thing concerning any doctrine, viz., whether it be of man, or whether it be of God. Should any ask how they can draw a line between the thoughts of God and the thoughts of man in independence of that condition, there is no answer except this: They are asking for what the Scriptures nowhere promise, and for a power which, if possessed, would take away the moral discipline which their study now affords.

### *Section VI.—The General Credibility of the Bible.*

We pass now from the test of absolute infallibility to try the Scriptures by a lower but more practical standard. Logically, we might proceed at once to inquire: Does the Bible contain any superhuman elements? without staying to discuss its general excellence and credibility. Gold does not cease to be gold, however inferior the substance in which it is embedded; and so an oracle may be Divine, though uttered by prophets or 'priests which have infirmity,' and preserved in a volume made of earthly materials. The man in Christ's parable, who parted with all his possession to buy a field in which he had found a buried treasure, did not stop to ask about the quality of the soil. If a friend had turned up a spadeful of poor earth and said 'This field is not worth buying,' the man would still have persisted in his design. So, if we can find a Divine message in the Bible, it must be our wisdom to hold it as the most precious thing in

the world, whatever surrounding imperfections may be thrown up by critics before our eyes.

But while this is true theoretically, most men have an irresistible feeling that God would not deposit His truth in a book which abounded in fiction. False statements about earthly things would destroy the credit of writers who profess to convey heavenly communications. Legends presented as sober history would diminish confidence in all moral teachings that might be founded upon them, and we should be invincibly suspicious of the most strikingly fulfilled predictions if they were associated with manifest dishonesty in the narration of past or contemporaneous events. Errors are human, and cleave to the highest and purest human works. But we justly distinguish between these inevitable traits of man's infirmity and that untruthfulness or gross ignorance which disqualifies for the task of writing history.

The general credibility of the Scriptures thus becomes of great importance. We want to know that the writers were honest and well-informed—men who, in regard to the earthly side of their work, may be trusted as we should desire to be trusted ourselves. More than this would be superfluous, less than this would be fatal to their usefulness. Let a man imagine himself the recipient of a Divine oracle suited to the England of to-day. Let him further imagine himself sitting down to write this message in conjunction with so much narration of English history, and so much allusion to natural phenomena, public men, and foreign affairs as would be requisite for the effective deliverance of his message. Let him conceive the degree of

accuracy he would be likely to attain in his own part of the work, if divinely inspired to undertake the task and to put the substance of the oracle as God desired. Let him further consider how he would wish to be treated by his fellow-men afterwards; how grieved and indignant he would feel if his message were refused because of some scarcely scientific expressions, or some minor mistakes about names or dates, or the precise order of subordinate events. Let him also consider how complacently he would endure the closest literary criticism, if only his fidelity and general competence were approved, and his Divine message reverently entertained. Having gone through this exercise of imagination, he will know fairly well how to measure and appreciate the general credibility of the Scriptures.

The Bible has been assailed in recent times on the score of its alleged opposition to some conclusions of physical science. So far as this attack is directed against miracles as assumed to be incompatible with the reign of natural law, it has been dealt with in the preceding chapter. All that will be attempted here is to estimate the importance of any unscientific expressions or views which may actually exist.

Few expositors now assert that the authors of Scripture exhibit a perfect knowledge of Nature. Among ancient writers they stand alone in their intense appreciation of the beauty and wisdom displayed in what they contemplate as the works of God's hands. The knowledge evinced by them is surprisingly minute and varied, and in many respects has been strikingly verified by the results of modern research. In some cases their knowledge is utterly inexplicable; *e.g.*, the

acquaintance with vast astronomical cycles implied in certain prophetic announcements. It is obvious, also, that the study of Nature was regarded by the Hebrews as the mark of a religious spirit, and is directly encouraged by many fervent admonitions. The descriptions of natural objects which abound in the Bible have never been surpassed or even equalled, and the sublime imagery drawn from natural scenes and events with which the Bible teems has made it a storehouse from which orators and poets have filled their minds and enriched their noblest productions. If required by our present argument, enough might be written on these and kindred points to show that we are largely indebted to the Bible for the modern spirit of inquiry and of patient observation. But when all this had been said and admitted, we should still be confronted with a variety of real or alleged inaccuracies: *e.g.*, it is now generally allowed that the account of the creation in Genesis i. contains some views which are not in strict accordance with the teachings of modern science. The points of difference now asserted are not so serious as those which have been disposed of, but they are not to be ignored. Only a few belated guardians of ill-chosen and generally abandoned positions persist in affirming that the days spoken of are periods of twenty-four hours. The opinion of some ancient interpreters is now commonly received on both sides of the controversy; *viz.*, that the events allotted to some of the 'days' include prolonged processes of change—as, *e.g.*, the growth, seed-bearing, and propagation of plants—and that therefore the word 'day' must, as in many other places, be

understood to denote an age. Whether the order of natural progress from the primitive chaos to the existing cosmos precisely corresponded to the order of this ancient description is still an open question. Scientific knowledge is not yet complete, and what is called science to-day may be as greatly modified by future discoveries as the opinions of thirty years ago have been by later researches and discussions. Biblical interpretation, also, is not finally determined. Knowledge of Nature has hitherto been the best expositor of Genesis, and has opened our eyes to see wonders which formerly were concealed; and until this expositor has finished his work, we may be content to await the results. While experts in two distinct, though now related, branches of study are debating the harmony of their respective conclusions, some of which upon both sides are variable and tentative, it ill becomes us to be dogmatic. The possible points of disagreement between the final exegesis of Nature and of Genesis are now fairly well known. Some of these points are generally thought to be established; but without indulging in any admissions or assertions, I propose to ask, Whether the author of Genesis would be discredited and the value of the Bible be diminished if these points of disagreement should be finally and indisputably established?

The only way of arriving at an answer to this question is, first of all to ascertain what object he had before him in writing. If he laboured to teach mankind physical science, the admission destroys his claim to retain a place among our instructors in this age, however far he may have been in advance of his own.

If he founded a religious doctrine, or an ethical principle, on a supposed physical fact which turns out to be imaginary, his doctrine or principle is not thereby proved untrue, but his authority as a teacher is forfeited.

But when we examine the account of creation, it speedily appears that the author of the first chapter of Genesis had no theory in science to establish. His one great aim was to teach a fundamental lesson of religious faith. His grand doctrine is summed up by the writer to the Hebrews: 'By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which do appear' (Hebrews xi. 3). That is a faith which lies at the back of all science. Physical search can neither prove nor disprove it. It has nothing whatever to do with the method or duration of the formative work. It asserts against Atheism that the universe has a Divine Maker. Against Pantheism it affirms that God and His works are not to be confounded, nor to be distinguished merely as the whole from its parts. Against Polytheism it declares that the world has not many rulers, but One. What was needed as an introduction to a book of instruction in religion was not a miraculous description of facts which are written for our discovery in the rocks and stars. Men could well afford to wait for their knowledge of things made until able to acquire it for themselves and might wisely be left to find some of their highest culture and purest enjoyments in its pursuit. The one thing needful as a prelude to all revelation was an oracle to declare that it was One Eternal God who

created the heavens, and stretched them forth ; who 'spread abroad the earth and that which cometh out of it ;' and 'that giveth breath to the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein' (Isaiah xlii. 5). This is the grand purport and burden of the sublime Psalm of Creation in Genesis. In a few sentences of unrivalled beauty, it traces in outline the development of the earth from chaos to form, and thence the introduction of vegetable and animal life in an ascending scale, until at last man appears upon the scene as the destined inhabitant for whom the spacious home was prepared, and as the appointed lord over the entire domain. Unless we believe this oracle, we cannot respond to the invitation which runs through the Bible, to 'worship and bow down,' and 'kneel before the Lord our Maker.' If we accept it as true, no discoveries within the realm of things made can shake our trust in God as the Author and Master of things. All Atheistic inferences drawn from physical knowledge, and all idolatrous tendencies which are linked with physical ignorance, are directly at variance with Genesis. But the actual knowledge of Nature which has been gathered in our day may all be read into the lines of the ancient story, and should deepen our admiration for its marvellous simplicity and comprehensive truth.

If the Hebrew account of the creation be compared with the Chaldean, which inculcates idolatry, and is full of low morality and absurd fancies,* the religious value of it for the ancient world will be vividly realized. If it be compared with those modern works which describe the evolution of the world in materialistic

* 'The Chaldean Account of Genesis,' by George Smith.

terms, and to the exclusion of a Great First Cause, its religious value for our own day will be apparent. Having seen how absurd and incredible is the Materialistic hypothesis, we may also venture to retort the charge of error upon its authors. The imperfections of Genesis in matters of physical science are small as the specks of dust which float in the sunbeams, but which cast no visible shadow. The great sun shines in upon us with unimpaired power and glory, in spite of all these flecks. But purely mechanical theories of how the world took form involve such monstrous beliefs in physical impossibilities that their errors are by comparison as huge as the moon in an eclipse. By them the first principles of physical science are darkened, while at the same time the Great Father of Lights is hidden from the world, and a cold shadow of Death is cast upon the souls of men.

Space forbids the further discussion of scientific objections to the credibility of the Bible. If the views already advanced commend themselves to the reader, such discussions, however interesting, and for many purposes valuable, will not here be requisite. If the first oracle concerning God as the Creator be rejected, the remainder of the Bible must go with it in one mass as a book of religious instruction furnished by God. If it be received as true, and its light be carried as a lamp for the perusal of all subsequent pages, no difficulty will be felt in passages which speak of Nature in the current phraseology of the ages in which they were written. Unless God meant to give a revelation of all the chief sciences, He must generally allow His servants to write in the ordinary manner of their time. It is

scarcely necessary to point out how much worse than superfluous such a premature revelation would have been. To man's intellectual discipline it would have been fatal, by excusing him the toils and pains of investigation; and yet at the same time its vastness and complexity would have interposed an enormous obstacle to the study of religious knowledge.

The most decisive test of general credibility is that supplied by History. Unsparing efforts have been made in some quarters to prove the legendary character of the Scriptures; and outside the circle of critical students there is a wide-spread impression that this attempt has been successful. Those who have been taught that there are, and can be, no discrepancies in the Bible, are naturally staggered when a few of these, however unimportant, are pointed out, and are predisposed to allow that the discovery is as fatal as both assailants and defenders of the Bible have asserted. The position already taken in this chapter makes room for the frank admission of flaws wherever they can be proved to exist: but experience shows that they are rare; and advancing knowledge, which seems at first to multiply their number, is steadily diminishing the list. To illustrate what is meant by this statement, and to show how much caution is needed in dealing with assertions which are verbally discrepant or contradictory, a fact may be mentioned in connection with Woolston, the celebrated Deist. It was commonly believed about the time of his death, and has usually been stated since, that Woolston died in prison; but Voltaire says, 'Nothing can be falser; several of my friends saw him since his prosecution, in his own house,

where he died at liberty.'* It would be difficult to find a more direct and apparently irreconcilable conflict of testimony; but Dr. Cairns has discovered facts which show that Voltaire was correct, and yet that the Abbé Avocat, and others whom he charged with untruth, were correct also. It appears that Woolston had not been discharged from prison, but that he dwelt in his own hired house, which was within the so-called 'liberty' of the Old King's Bench in Southwark.† This is a fair illustration of what has taken place in many instances where Biblical statements have been impugned, and indicates the sort of reconciliation that a more detailed knowledge of ancient facts might presumably establish where not yet ascertained. In countless instances where hasty criticism finds an apparent fault, further research beholds an excellency; and where an unsympathetic reader pounces on a blemish, loving insight discerns, and patient labour verifies, exquisite harmonies and coincidences hidden by verbal variations. An interesting volume has been written on these 'Undesigned Coincidences;' but the cases therein noticed, though numerous, are few in comparison with the multitude which might be gathered. Those who are not discouraged by difficulties, commonly find that they provoke to the most fruitful study, and open paths of pleasantest research. This statement may not count for much as a positive argument, but it is the common testimony of thousands who spend the major part of life in such pursuits; and if weighed against some opposite assertions will be found to turn the scale.

* 'Comments on Eminent Authors,' Letter IV.

† 'Unbelief in the Eighteenth Century,' J. Cairns, p. 288.

There are some marks of veracity which lie upon the face of the Old Testament history. In ordinary histories, written by patriots, and especially in those of ancient date, the tone is boastful. Whatever can minister to national pride is amplified and highly coloured, but humiliations are either passed over in silence or toned down. Victories and great achievements are emblazoned, but defeats and blunders are discreetly covered up. We turn to the Hebrew Scriptures, and all this is reversed. The men and women they depict are all frail, faulty beings, like those we see and know. Their battles are not all triumphs; their kings are not all regal, nor their soldiers all heroic, nor their priests all holy, nor their prophets all wise and true. Of their most famous and honoured ancestors, the writers narrate incidents of the most culpable character. Abraham is held up as a pattern of faith and righteousness; yet the world is told how, through the presence of a passing fear, he condescended to an act of the meanest kind. The favouritism of Isaac, the fraud of Jacob, the idolatry of Aaron, the anger of Moses, and the adultery of David, are all set down with unshrinking fidelity. The crimes and follies of the people are portrayed in darkest tints; while ignominious passages of national life, which pride would have striven to bury in oblivion, are dwelt upon at length. These traits are the marks of photography, not of imaginative painting; and they attest the honesty and judicial severity with which Hebrew history was written by Hebrew authors in the Bible.

It is impossible to account for these characteristics by accusing the writers of unpatriotic feelings. They

evidently loved their country, and were ready to sacrifice themselves for its honour; but were profoundly convinced that the best lessons were to be learned from the most painful experiences. Their common aim was manifestly to uphold God's honour, and to show how nothing but righteousness and fidelity to Him can ultimately prosper. It was this aim which delivered them from spurious patriotism, and preserved them alike from conceited self obtrusion and from indulging in any flatteries of the living, or the dead, the small or great among their fellows.

But we are not obliged to rest our faith in the veracity of the Bible on such general grounds alone. Within recent years new materials for the study of ancient history have been obtained. Excavators have removed the rubbish under which the remains of some of the chief cities of antiquity lay buried, and so have brought to light libraries which supply contemporary records for comparison with various Scripture narratives. If the Bible had been filled with myths, what a day of doom would have been ushered in when the first spadeful of sand was thrown off the mounds of Mesopotamia and Egypt; and when scientific explorers began to measure the caves, clear out the water-courses, and lay bare the foundations of fallen buildings in Palestine! But what has been the result? Simply to bring out of the dust proof after proof, sign after sign, that those Scriptures, which professedly contain the oracles of God, are also faithful and true witnesses of bygone ages of the world. The humiliating confessions of the Hebrews are confirmed by many vaunting boasts of their enemies, and the so-called legends of their

earlier history are established beyond cavil to be sober truth.

Anything like a complete review of so vast a stretch of history would be impossible here. Such a task, however, is not needful for our purpose. The question of credibility can be settled for all practical purposes by a few specimen cases, just as the distribution of certain deep strata can be determined with as much practical certainty by a small number of borings, as if square miles of superficial soil were removed. It may safely be inferred that if the most ancient part of Hebrew history is of a solid and trustworthy character, the later portions will be the same. Myths do not follow after, but precede the chronicles of sober fact. If, therefore, the chief events which contributed to the making of Israel as a nation are confirmed by foreign records, the later history will assuredly not be less veracious. These foreign records may be, and unquestionably are, far inferior to the more literary and consecutive memorials of the Hebrews, but their authenticity and genuineness cannot be questioned, nor can the most suspicious mind imagine collusion between their authors and the scribes of Israel.

The story of Lot's captivity, and his rescue by Abraham (Gen. xiv.), has often been impugned on the supposition of a manifestly improper reversal of the relations between Babylon and Elam. The author of the account in Genesis represents Chedorlaomer as the head of the kings mentioned, whereas, according to a long-standing belief of historians, Amraphel, King of Shinar (Babylonia), must have held that position, if any such alliance had existed. It is now ascertained

that there was an early, and hitherto unsuspected, conquest of Babylon by Elam; that a powerful Elamite dynasty ruled in Babylon, and that the names of the kings of this line were the names of different gods compounded with Chedor or Kudor (supposed to mean servant), as in Chedorlaomer, 'the servant of Laomer or Lagamer,' a Susianian god. On one of these recovered inscriptions Asshur-bani-pal, the son of Esarhaddon, relates that in his eighteenth year (B.C. 651), he restored certain images of gods, which had been carried to Susa 1635 years before by Kudor-Nakhunta, King of Elam. In this case, the monument records an old reverse in order to magnify a new success, and thus incidentally preserves a date and some facts which verify the historic setting of a most important incident in Abraham's career.*

Another mark of accuracy in the story of Abraham is obtained from the Egyptian monuments. From very remote times the horse has been closely identified with Egypt. Horses and chariots figure in the story of the Exodus, and recur in many incidents and allusions; yet, as often pointed out, in the list of presents made to Abraham by Pharaoh (Gen. xii. 16), these animals are conspicuously absent. Does not this betray the hand of an inventor who was ignorant of the country? Until very lately criticism said 'Yes,' and the abundance of horses which appear in pictorial representations of royal gifts and tributary offerings on the walls of Egyptian temples and tombs appeared to confirm the objection. But it now transpires that, up to a date somewhat later than can be fixed for Abraham's visit,

* 'Rawlinson's Ancient Monarchies,' Vol. I., p. 161.

horses were not introduced into Egypt, either for military or domestic purposes. They were brought in as trophies from an Eastern expedition during the XVIIIth dynasty, as represented in the tomb of a warrior named Pahir, at El-Kab, where there is a picture of a pair of horses with a chariot, the horses and their coachman bearing Semitic names.*

The story of Joseph has been freely treated as a romantic legend quite at variance with the known conditions of life in Egypt. The tale of a seven years' famine, and especially the statement that grain was stored up as a provision against scarcity in the Nile Valley, has been ridiculed as incredible. But Egyptologists have uncovered the tomb of a man named Baba, who was governor of an Egyptian province in the time of the Shepherd Kings, when Joseph also lived, and on the wall of sacrifice in this tomb the following inscription occurs: 'I collected the harvest, a friend of the harvest god. I was watchful at the time of sowing. And now when a famine arose, lasting many years, I issued out corn to the city at each famine.'† This memorial, which has lain buried under sand for thousands of years, establishes the double fact that there was an unparalleled famine in the Nile country at the time stated in Genesis, and that the people were kept alive by such an unusual collection and storage of corn as is there ascribed to Joseph's counsel. The epitaph is precisely what one of the district rulers under Joseph would, according to the boastful habit of his class, have

* See Brugsch, 'Egypt under the Pharaohs,' Vol. I., p. 295.
† Ibid., Vol. I., p. 263.

placed on his tomb if he had carried out Joseph's commands in his own particular province.

Many other features of the narrative in Genesis and Exodus have received an equally remarkable verification. The title of Joseph's office, 'Adon,' is pure Egyptian. The proper names mentioned are many of them found on the monuments of the day. Dr. Brugsch has shown that about Joseph's time a kind of Semitism became fashionable among the 'golden youth' of Egypt, and was satirized by grave scribes, just as a similar aping of foreign manners has often been ridiculed in our own country.

It appears that between the time of Joseph and that of the Exodus the Shepherd Kings were expelled and a new dynasty founded. Rameses II. has been identified with the Pharaoh of the Bondage, and monuments prove that the cities he is said in Genesis to have employed the Israelites to build were built by him at the time stated, and by the labour of foreign slaves, driven by taskmasters with whips in hand. The name of his daughter, 'Meris,' is also found on the tombs, and answers to a tradition preserved by Josephus. Close to the battlefield of Tel-el-Kebir the agents of the Egyptian Exploration Fund have recently uncovered an ancient city bearing Pa-Tum, or Pithom, as its religious, and Sukut, or Succoth, as its civil name. This place is described in Exodus i. 11 as one of the treasure or store cities which the Israelites built, and this description is verified in unmistakable ways. A broken statue has been found bearing the inscription: 'Pames-Isis, the official of Tum of Succoth, prophet of Hathor, and head of the storehouse.' The construction

of the place also exhibits its character and purpose beyond doubt. Except in one corner, where the ruins of a temple remain, the entire area is occupied by solidly-built store-chambers or cellars, having walls about ten feet thick, but with no doors or windows, and evidently intended to be filled and emptied from the top. Perhaps the most remarkable discovery of all is that the bricks used in their construction are found to be of three qualities. The best are well made with straw, the second in quality contain reeds (stubble), such as the Israelites had to gather for themselves (Ex. i. 12), and the worst are mere mud, as they would be when the supply of reeds failed.* The cry of the enslaved Hebrews seems thus to rise up anew out of the earth after more than three thousand years of silence, and the tale of their abject misery is told afresh in the very works of their hands in the land from which they were delivered.

It seems vain to hope that further researches will find any actual record of the Exodus. Unlike the Hebrew historians, the Egyptians have preserved no memorials of their own reverses and calamities. Nevertheless, some indirect but unmistakable traces of the event have been discovered. A monument now in the Berlin Museum mentions the death of a son of Mineptah II., the Pharaoh of the Exodus, but the tombs of the period are silent about the king's own death and the closing scenes of his reign. Other kings of his nation 'sleep in glory, everyone in his own house,' but he passed away under the shame of some

* E. Naville, 'The Store City of Pithom, and the Route of the Exodus.'

circumstance which pride would not narrate. Memorials of the immediately subsequent period, however, distinctly reveal a time of confusion and national depression. The great works of the architect in building cities and temples were arrested, as would inevitably be the case if large numbers of foreign labourers were suddenly removed; no military expeditions took place for about forty years, and the nation which just before had been full of vital energy and pride was reduced to stagnation and feebleness.

As we descend in time and the history of Israel touches other lands, the materials for its verification become enormous. An attempt to compare the discoveries of modern explorers in Moab, Palestine, Nineveh, Babylon, and Egypt, with the later history of the Old Testament, would require volumes. Works of this character have been prepared by writers specially qualified for the task, and to these the reader must be referred for any further pursuit of the inquiry.* It is submitted with confidence that the facts already adduced in confirmation of the earliest and most extraordinary portions of the history are abundantly sufficient for our present object. Myths find no substantiation through the spade of the excavator, and he who reads the stories of Abraham, of Joseph, and of Israel in Egypt as verified history will know himself on firm ground when the nation enters the land in which

* See, in addition to those already cited, 'Egypt and Babylon,' by Canon Rawlinson; 'Light from the Ancient Monuments,' by Professor Sayce; 'The Memoirs of the Survey of Western Palestine,' edited by Professor E. H. Palmer and W. Besant; and 'Heth and Moab,' by C. R. Conder.

it was found by Greeks and Romans, and whence its children have notoriously been cast forth as exiles for nearly two thousand years. The main events of the wonderful history which follows on from the Exodus are not disputed. The glories of David and Solomon, the partition of the kingdom, the wars and captivities of the two branches of the nation, the restoration of Judah, the Greek and Roman conquests, and the rise of the Christian religion before the destruction of Jerusalem, are events as certain as the Roman and Norman conquests of England.

For many reasons it would be convenient in this place to examine the historic credibility of the New Testament. It is impossible, however, to discuss that subject without entering at the same time into many deeper questions relative to Christ's Life and Resurrection. The general considerations which have been offered as to the credibility of Scripture apply to the entire Bible, but the particular evidences of the truthfulness of the gospels must stand over for treatment in the two following chapters.

### *Section VII.—The Presence of Divine Elements in the Bible.*

We now proceed to apply our third test, by inquiring, Does the Bible contain any elements which are manifestly Divine ?

It is necessary at the outset to define the scope of this investigation. We are not about to ask How much of the Bible is Divine, but, Is any of it Divine ? Prior to actual mining operations no surveyor can say how much gold there is in a given region, or what proportion

it bears to the common soil. These are points which can only be decided by much digging. Practical miners will only demand whether there is a reasonable prospect of finding sufficient gold to repay the cost of working. So with the Bible. If the views here advocated are correct, it is a vast mine of wealth, which discloses greater riches the more diligently it is explored. But in commending it to the study of others it is only needful to exhibit a few specimens of the fine gold it contains. Any communication granted by God for the guidance and help of man in his journey from mystery to mystery, must be so unspeakably precious that even one Divine oracle would richly compensate the most prolonged and arduous toil.

The things which Christians most prize as Divine are those which in Paul's phrase can only be 'spiritually discerned;' but there are some elements which can be subjected to the coarser tests of criticism. One of the most definite of these is the knowledge of future events. The predictive aspect of prophecy has in recent years been less esteemed than the ethical, and for the general purposes of instruction most justly; but if it can be shown that the Scriptures contain distinct prognostications of events which have really taken place, and that the events foretold were such as no human sagacity could have foreseen as certain, or conjectured as probable, then these predictions must have an evidential force irrespective of their moral value or their spiritual import.

While endeavouring to show that such predictions are to be found in the Bible, I shall not rely upon any disputed dates of authorship. Without making any

assertions or admissions therefore with respect to various controverted matters, it will be submitted that even if all the dates insisted upon by the most hostile criticism be conceded, the Scriptures still exhibit not merely an occasional power of forecast, or a few happy anticipations, but a continuous and increasingly distinct prescience of the general course of history, and of some particular events by which that course has been unmistakably determined.

I pass over what is known as the Protevangelium (Gen. iii. 15) as an oracle which admits of varied interpretations, and shall not dwell on the singular ethnological forecast attributed to Noah (Gen. ix. 25), although the political and moral relationships of the main branches of the human family have answered to the outline. Apart from later and more definite predictions, these are not likely to secure conviction. If, however, a student finds that they stand related to subsequent predictions as faint glimpses of a distant city swathed in morning mists are related to those clearer views which are obtained as the traveller nears its gates, he will not be blind to their significance as indications that the human race was granted, even from the earliest times, some hopeful intimations of good things to come.

It has already been shown that the life of Abraham is no mere legendary tale; but if any reader should insist that a true historic outline may have received sundry mythical embellishments, the point may be reserved as one to be decided by the investigation rather than assumed at the outset. The lowest date for the documents in Genesis may also be taken as a basis of

discussion. The facts which still remain unquestioned are quite inexplicable on natural grounds. It is in any case certain that the oracles which are stated in Genesis to have been given to Abraham were at a very early time believed to be Divine by his descendants. It is also certain that from him arose 'an entirely independent' monotheism, marked by the 'peculiar name for the true God, *El-Shaddai*.'* It is furthermore indisputable that faith in this 'God of Abraham,' and in the promises attributed to Him, was a fashioning power which did much to unite the families of Israel into a separate nation; that it has continued to hold them apart from other peoples, in an unparalleled manner, for more than 3,000 years, and has proved itself an indissoluble bond throughout nearly 2,000 years not merely of exile, but of world-wide dispersion.

However these facts are to be explained, it is evident that their early anticipation by Abraham's children would be as remarkable as their announcement by himself. If a veritable prediction can be traced back to the popular beliefs of the Hebrews in an age long anterior to its fulfilment, the precise date of the oracle in which it was embodied is for evidential purposes immaterial. If such a prediction be demonstrated, criticism will have no interest in contesting the exact time and circumstances of its original delivery.

It is not disputed that the conviction that Abraham was called of God for great and world-wide purposes arose by some means at a very early time. The only question is as to whether this belief amounted to a superhuman prescience. It must frankly be conceded

* Ewald, 'History of Israel,' Vol. I., p. 321.

that a persuasion of the truth of Abraham's creed and of its power to outlive all rival religions might spring up naturally among his descendants. An expectation that His posterity were eventually to become a numerous and prosperous nation might also take form and acquire strength as such a prospect became probable. But these ideas do not fairly represent the scope of Abraham's oracle. Without asking whether it predicted a personal Messiah, it will suffice to observe that the oracle in its various forms points not merely to the prosperity of a nation, or to the spread of monotheism, but to Abraham's posterity as the instrument by which God, who had blessed him, would in time bless all nations.*

It will doubtless be contended that even this latter part of the expectation was so probable as to arise in a natural way. But this contention will not bear analysis. Of course, after a belief in the alleged promises to Abraham had taken root, their fulfilment would appear probable to all who believed them Divine; but we have to deal with the source of that belief, not with its results. The question now requiring answer is whether such a destiny as the Hebrews anticipated for their race, and which by some means found expression in the oracle before us, was antecedently so probable as to be naturally foreseen, and thence in course of time become clothed in the form of a mythical covenant between Abraham and God.

In answering this question we can afford to concede far more than can be justly claimed for the sagacity of the Hebrews. We may allow that they would very

* See Gen. xii. 2, 3; xviii. 18, 19: xxii. 17, 18; xxvi. 2—5; xxviii. 13, 15.

early expect their sons to do much for the spread of their monotheism. But we cannot admit that they would naturally expect for their race a perpetual and world-wide monopoly in this work! Yet this is what the oracle in Genesis foretells. If all nations were to receive the blessing of a pure religion through Abraham's posterity, no philosopher or prophet must rise up in any other nation to forestall the work, however long it might be delayed. But if, as some Theists contend, monotheism is only a product of the human reason, it was beyond all calculation probable that some foreigners would attain a worthy Theism independently of the Hebrews, and would do in other parts of the world what the Patriarchs and their sons were doing in their own sphere. When once the religion of the Hebrews is regarded as 'mere natural theology,' their expectations appear in the highest degree presumptuous and improbable. These expectations could only conceivably arise in the minds of men who, in addition to a bare Theism, believed that God had verily spoken to Abraham and intimated the choice of his family, as the oracle declares. Moreover, if that belief was false, the probability amounted to a moral certainty, that events would expose its falsity, and that time would prove the folly of all family and national hopes based upon it, rather than conspire with fate to accord them a complete fulfilment.

The question now arises, Have these hopes been fulfilled? and has the fulfilment been worked out on such a scale, and with such unmistakable clearness, as to prove the existence of a prediction? The answer is written large in history. Many of the most conspicuous

facts which have been chronicled for thousands of years exhibit a continuous and progressive fulfilment. In the old world Moses was the mightiest teacher, and he was a son of Abraham. After him came the long series of Hebrew psalmists and prophets, whose teachings were scattered by Jewish colonists and traders, by public synagogues and by a Greek version of the Old Testament, over the entire Roman empire. Chiefest figure in the midst of the ages came Christ, a son of Abraham. After Him, and preaching His message, came the Apostles and their helpers, who 'turned the world upside down,' and these also were Abraham's seed, not only in faith but in the flesh. Mohammed, who has spread an adulterated monotheism over a large section of mankind, boasted of Abrahamic descent, and confessedly imbibed his Theism from an imperfect acquaintance with Jewish and Christian doctrines. The book which has been, and still is, the most potent influence in the modern world, was produced exclusively by men of Abraham's race, and every Christian preacher and missionary, every Christian parent and teacher, takes that volume in hand as a text-book, and derives all his views of God and eternity, and all his moral counsels and spiritual persuasions, from its unrivalled store. To place that book within the reach of the very lowest of mankind not a few have spent, and many now are spending, their lives, in creating written languages for barbarous peoples; and there is to-day no speech nor language of any importance under the sun where the voices of Abraham's children are not heard declaring the glory of the God he worshipped. We cannot say that the fulfilment of the oracle is now absolutely com-

plete; but then the world has not yet closed its history. We can say, however, as regards the present, that there is scarcely a nation in existence which has not partially received Abraham's blessing; and as to the future, we know enough of the world and its inhabitants to affirm that the religious teachers of Abraham's race are so completely in possession of the field, that unless an original Theism should be discovered among the unvisited tribes of Central Africa, or a prophet should spring up untaught in the midst of some savage people, like an oak growing spontaneously on an unclothed coral reef, the entire Theism of the future must be the fruitage of Abraham's seed. Such a family monopoly in the tuition and leadership of religion, maintained for thousands of years, and now more manifest and irreversible than ever, was absolutely beyond any human foresight. It is a fact no ingenuity can possibly explain away, and one which surely warrants our belief that the author of the oracle in Genesis was possessed of superhuman knowledge, and that the events which have wrought out its age-enduring accomplishment have been under the superintendence of Him who declared them before they came to pass.

Working within this vast outline of religious progress in its relation to the spiritual faith and fleshly family of Abraham, the Hebrew Scriptures reiterate the fundamental oracle in countless different forms. Whatever conclusions may be accepted as to the dates of their composition, or redaction, they show that the hopes of Abraham's children were indestructible, surviving many relapses of the nation into idolatry, and many calamities which threatened it with extermination.

As time elapsed, national expectations were concentrated on the person of an individual servant of Jehovah. The collective body of the nation was to be God's servant; but with increasing distinctness it was anticipated that Israel's grand work would be performed by one transcendent leader. In the last century Collins and his fellow Deists asserted that no traces of such an expectation are discoverable until close to the time of Christ; but the severity of more recent criticism has finally disposed of their contention. Strauss takes his stand on the monument which proclaims the victory of Christianity over Collins and his school, and proposes to explain the career of Christ as a conscious impersonation of the Messiah so vividly portrayed in the prophets and so eagerly awaited by the people in His day. With various modifications, this is the general attitude of educated unbelievers in our day.

The most ancient Jewish writings which comment on the Old Testament mention no less than 456 passages which were regarded by the Rabbins as Messianic; and the compiler of this list* does not regard it as exhaustive. Limited space forbids a review of so vast a series; but inasmuch as the prevalence of such prophecies is now admitted, this is scarcely a disadvantage. The only evidence requisite to prove their superhuman character relates in a minor degree to the precise intention of their writers, but mainly to the legitimacy of their alleged fulfilment. In view of these facts it will be sufficient for us to take one test case. By universal consent the passage known as Isaiah liii.

* Edersheim, 'Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah,' Vol. II., p. 707.

is the most important and the one on which a decisive issue may be raised.

The chapter opens with a lament over a state of general incredulity respecting a 'servant of the Lord' named in preceding verses, and then passes into a description of his unique character and career.

The special features of this picture which require to be combined in any scheme of interpretation and in any legitimate fulfilment are :

1. The servant is God's arm, *i.e.*, in some special sense he is an instrument used by the Divine Will.

2. He appears upon the scene from some obscure quarter, and grows up without manifesting to ordinary eyes the credentials of a God-sent leader.

3. He is despised and rejected by the people, and is regarded by them as under a Divine curse.

4. While thus despised by men, and apparently abhorred of God, he is without sin.

5. While subjected to terrible sufferings, and at last put to death, he utters no complaint.

6. His sufferings, though inflicted as penal by the people, are of God's appointment, and are willingly endured as the healing chastisement of other men's sins.

7. After he has poured out his soul in death as an offering for sin, he is to prolong his days, and God's appointed work, which seemed to fail, is to prosper in his hands.

8. He is to be amply satisfied for all his travail by the mystical bringing forth of a numerous seed through these birth-throes of death.

9. His future work will be of a priestly character in

making intercession for transgressors and justifying many.

Up to the time of Christ this passage was regarded by all Jews as Messianic; but the exigencies of controversy with Christian apologists speedily led them to seek a more convenient interpretation. By many of their writers, and by a few others, it has been assumed that the passage refers to Israel as a nation, and describes its treatment by the Gentiles. Superficially viewed this theory seems plausible, but it fails to satisfy some of the most important conditions which have been enumerated—conditions, it should be observed, in which no stress is laid on verbal niceties, but in which the substance of the prophet's thought is preserved, though differently expressed. In common with all other prophecies, the second part of Isaiah denounces the people of Israel as full of violence and guile. The captivity is treated as a just punishment for wickedness, and the return to Zion as an undeserved mercy. While enduring judgment, the nation was anything but silent and lamb-like. Moreover, the persons who despise the Lord's servant while he bears their sins are certainly Israelites, as is proved by the prophet's use of plural pronouns in the first person in confessional clauses, and by their description as 'my people,' an expression which cannot be mistaken.

Those who would escape these fatal objections by limiting the reference to the godly part of Israel are scarcely happier in their attempt. Throughout the Old Testament writings the loudest outpourings of confession proceed from the lips of the godliest men, and in this chapter there is no excuse for limiting the cry,

'All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.' This language corresponds to the rule by which the prophets identify themselves with the nation in its collective unity, and as a sinful body before God. It has also to be observed that the godly portion appear to have suffered far less during the exile than any others. Jeremiah was specially favoured by the King of Babylon; Daniel and his friends were exalted to the highest posts in the kingdom; Ezekiel was in a position of honour; and other notable names at once suggest themselves to show that at this period the godly were specially favoured rather than specially afflicted by the Gentiles. Assuredly no prophet who was embued with the spirit of his ancient faith would be so destitute of the humility and unobtrusive meekness here lauded in 'the servant of God' as to claim for himself and his religious associates such a character, such functions, and such a peculiar destiny as he here describes.

To obviate these further objections, some affirm that the prophet meant to depict, not the actual Israel in whole or part, but the ideal Israel. But in what sense could an 'ideal Israel' be said to 'grow up before' God 'as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground,' and to have 'no form or comeliness'? Such a description is inapplicable to an ideal, whether considered as resident in the mind of God or in the minds of men. A Divine ideal can only be thought of as a perfect image or mental pattern of something afterwards to be produced; but it is by definition a thing of perfect beauty from the beginning. Similarly a human

ideal is always something high and beautiful in the imaginations of real people, and is contemplated by them as an object of aspiration. How, then, can this 'ideal Israel' be 'despised and rejected of men,' and 'as one from whom men hide their face'? An ideal, if it can be said to live at all, lives beyond the range of sorrows and grinding burdens; it is the real man who suffers for sin and is afflicted for his own and his neighbours' crimes, while his ideal floats before his chastened mind as a vision of what might have been his actual estate. How, then, can an ideal Israel be conceived of as bearing the griefs of the real, as wounded for their transgressions and bruised for their iniquities? In what mysterious sense can chastisement be laid on an 'ideal' so that it shall mistakenly be deemed 'stricken of God and afflicted' as a punishment for its own sins? Similar questions will occur to every careful reader clause by clause throughout the chapter. There is, indeed, no way in which this matchless passage can be sensibly construed except by taking the plural pronouns to denote the people of Israel, who confess their wickedness and bemoan their blind injustice towards a righteous friend who suffered for their sakes; and the singular pronouns to refer to the same individual servant of God who endures contempt and death at their hands, yet rises up from death to see of the travail of his soul, to prolong his days, and be satisfied in his seed.

The impossibility of avoiding this conclusion is now generally confessed, and various individuals have been proposed as specially answering to the picture of 'the servant of the Lord.' Hezekiah, Josiah, Isaiah, Jere-

miah, with others still more unsuitable, have been named, but none have found acceptance. It seems idle to controvert theories which simply catch at one or two out of many particulars, and ignore the grandeur of the outline and the most prominent features of the figure painted by the prophet. These were all great men, and far above the usual standard of goodness; but none were great or influential enough to occupy so large a space in the prophet's mind, and none were so righteous as to be lauded in such terms. If, as we are so confidently assured, the passage was written in the captivity, Hezekiah, Josiah, and Isaiah had been long dead; and had it been the prophet's purpose to magnify them, it might have been done by name. But what prophet could have been so infatuated as to imagine that these departed worthies, who were for the most part greatly honoured in life, were to have such a post-mortem career as the last verses describe? With regard to Jeremiah, he no doubt endured great afflictions at the hands of his countrymen; but apart from other disqualifications which he shared with the best of Israelites, he would scarcely have inspired the exquisite image of a lamb led in silence to the slaughter! To identify the author of the 'Lamentations,' and of those passionate protests which abound in his larger book, with the subject of Isaiah liii., is indeed a literary curiosity. Did the advocates of this theory never hear of 'a Jeremiad?'

In dismissing these theories as futile endeavours to get rid of a distinctly predictive element, it is not said that they contain no valuable thoughts, or that their authors are blind to some of the deepest truths which

underlie the chapter. It is not necessary to deny that Israel as a nation has been a great sufferer on behalf of the world, or that by her afflictions several precious and purifying principles have been made plain to mankind. On the contrary, all who have grasped the Biblical conception of Israel's place in history, and have considered how remarkably the actual facts correspond to this idea, will readily concede that, for the world's good, God has laid on his chosen people a tremendous burden.

Again, it need not be denied that the godly portion of Israel suffered grievously through the sins of their countrymen, nor that these sufferings were productive of much good. There were many martyrs in Israel, and in their degree they bore the iniquities of God's people. To these men also it was given to apprehend with superior clearness the mission of Abraham's children and the costliness of the service to which they were called. They saw that it demanded for its accomplishment a rare degree of gentleness and meekness, and a willingness to be persecuted and slain. There was an ideal Israel floating before the minds of the holiest men—as there is an ideal Church before the thoughts of Christ's disciples now—a spiritual nation, a glorious city such as never man upreared, and which can only come to earth from above.

We may go a step further, and allow, or, if needful, insist, that in all this the best men of Abraham's race perceived the working of a Divine and therefore a universal law. Every man and woman in the world who bravely endures hardship for the sake of truth and right; every victim of injustice, and of that blind scorn

which evil souls cherish for meekness and purity; every sympathetic heart which bleeds or breaks with grief on account of a beloved but guilty country, or family, or friend, does in some partial way fulfil this royal law of sacrifice, and is in a measure God's servant, and answers to some lineaments of the Messiah.

But the recognition of these truths still leaves the chapter uninterpreted. The question which tortured earnest servants of God in the times of the prophets was, How could the destiny of Abraham's children be fulfilled? How might the glorious purpose for which God was calling them to His service be accomplished? They felt themselves to be utterly incapable of the appointed task. The nation had sometimes appeared to be on the eve of a great epoch, but, as in the days of Caleb, the people turned back from the very borders of the land they had approached. Amid the splendours of Solomon's reign there seemed to dawn a day which promised to bring about those hopes of peace and power which David sang of in his psalms. But behind the material glory moral decay and national disruption were at work, and history seemed for centuries to be a mockery of those expectations. When a just and devout king like Hezekiah began to flourish, and the people were to some extent reformed, good men were ready to ask, 'Art thou He that should come?' but events speedily answered for each man in turn, 'I am not.' After each momentary disappointment prophetic souls began to 'look for another,' and another; each waxing and waning of hope making plain some further lesson respecting the conditions which must meet in the God-sent servant who was to be the glory of Israel

and a light for all nations. More and more clearly it appeared that unbelief and disobedience were the great impediments. The best kings and prophets failed, because with all their zeal they were too truly partakers of the general sin and infirmity to have sufficient spiritual energy to cleanse the hearts of the people, or lift them up to the level of their duty and privileges. Centuries taught them to despair of any real accomplishment of their God-appointed task without a leader who should be divinely commissioned and endowed, and in whom God would so truly be the worker, that his advent would be God's visitation of His people. From such a being indescribable blessings might be expected, and from Jerusalem as his central seat and capital, light and truth, judgment and mercy, must needs go forth to transform the world. But with this sublime hope there was also revealed a truth which the highest prophets only grasped with troubled, trembling minds. They were taught that even this predestined servant of God would not achieve his purpose without a process of suffering. He, too, must live under the great law of sacrifice, and become himself its great, and in the perfect sense its sole, fulfiller. In many places a mysterious blending of shame and glory, rejection and attraction, defeat and victory, death and endless life, perplexes the reader of Hebrew prophecy, as it astonished the men who wrote the visions. But nowhere is the commingling so manifestly centred in one person as in this chapter liii. of Isaiah; and nowhere is the manner of the sufferings and their true cause and nature, or the ultimate secret of triumph by their means, so definitely exhibited, and the order of events so vividly foretold.

The servant of God was not to be a foreign visitor, without relationship or resemblance to the prophets and kings who came before and did some preliminary work. He was to come and live under the same moral and social laws as they, and to do his work under the same conditions of affliction, ill-usage, and death. He was not to be at once established as a heavenly guest, but to grow up as 'a tender plant,' a lowly, sorrowful man. But while outwardly an ordinary man, he was to transcend his predecessors in every other respect. He was to be righteous in life and pure in spirit, as none of hem had been. His sufferings were to exceed theirs, but he would never be weakened inwardly by the sense of personal guilt, nor would the moral quality and influence of his sufferings on others, and before God, be impaired by the least transgression. As God subjected him to this sacrificial endurance of Israel's iniquities, so God would vindicate his character, deliver him from death, and accord him a career of moral conquest, wherein the destiny of Abraham's seed would be fulfilled and many nations be purified from sin.

In considering the fulfilment of this prophecy, two special features demand some comment. It has been shown that the people for whom the servant of the Lord was primarily to suffer death are unmistakably Israelites; but this does not forbid a widening of the thought so as to include many Gentiles in the benefits of His sufferings. The prophet's amazement and shame are peculiarly excited by the fact that the Messiah comes to His own, but His own receive Him not; yet he most distinctly foretells that all the earth will eventually share in the salvation to be wrought. Just before

(lii. 15), he has declared that this marred Son of man shall 'sprinkle many nations;' and elsewhere (xlix. 6) he represents God as saying to Him: 'It is too light a thing that Thou shouldest be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be My Salvation unto the end of the earth.' This language convincingly shows that Israel, including the more godly remnant, was to be saved by the Messiah, but that He was also to fulfil the promise to Abraham by becoming a blessing to all nations.

To this conclusion the closing words of chapter liii. correspond. The resuscitated servant is to bring forth a seed which shall satisfy the travail of his soul. This does not point to a physical posterity, but to a spiritual family. The travail is of the 'soul,' and it is on account of sin. Hence the generation to arise must be a multitude of men and women of like mind and character with himself, and their birth is the same thing as their justification 'by his knowledge,' viewed as the commencement of a new and holy life.

It is not surprising that the Jews failed to discern the full spiritual significance of this passage, and were unable to construct a satisfactory scheme of interpretation before Christ came. But, with the facts before our eyes, it requires no straining of a single clause or term to recognise its profound agreement with Christ's teachings about the necessity of a new spiritual birth for Jewish rulers and teachers in common with publicans, sinners, and Gentiles; with all the doctrines of the epistles which are developed from His speech; and with the facts of Christian life as a new type of character

introduced into the world by Christ, and propagated by means of that Gospel which conveys to mankind the knowledge of what He said and did and suffered.

A second feature of the prophecy requiring notice is the vividness with which details are wrought into a vast outline sketch. In former times these details were much insisted upon, but are now perhaps less considered than they deserve. In a lightly-drawn portrait an artist never attempts to give a minute facsimile of every line and wrinkle, yet a satisfactory general effect cannot be produced without some very precise delineations of separate features. The evidence of skill in the artist, and of the fact that he has drawn from nature, will be found in the success with which these touches are made to appear as portions of the first bold sketch, and are freed from any traces of additional labour or careful afterthought. When compared with the living subject the general likeness will first be seen ; but point by point a critic will observe how the most characteristic traits, and especially any unusual forms, have been seized upon and reproduced. If this canon of criticism be applied to the prophetic sketch of the Messiah and His times as compared with the Person and career of Christ, it will be found that while the broad outline of the central figure answers to His image, and its accessories to the effects He has produced throughout vast ages ; yet the same bold lines which produce this general effect are exquisitely true to many details which single Him out as an individual from all the sons of men.

We do not exceed the admissions of contemporary criticism when we affirm that the verisimilitude of the

antique portrait to the Person and career of Jesus, as He appears in the gospel narratives, has been established. Not a false stroke of the brush or an untrue tint in the colouring can be detected. In the course of eighteen hundred years countless authors of the most diversified gifts, training, and opportunities have consecrated their lives to the supreme task of showing forth the excellencies of this holy sufferer, and yet with all the materials at their command, and although many of them have possessed consummate literary ability, and not a few have displayed transcendent genius, no one has produced a sermon or poem which is worthy to be compared with the picture drawn by Isaiah or 'some great Unknown,' many centuries before Christ's birth.

There are, therefore, only two ways in which the inference drawn by Christians from this phenomenon can be resisted. It may be contended that the gospel narratives are not true; or, accepting many of their features, it may be alleged that Jesus studied the Messianic part, and played it with amazing skill before the world. Unless one of these grave charges can be sustained, the conclusion is irresistible that in Isaiah liii. we have a verified oracle of God.

The questions now stated will form the subject of the two succeeding chapters. Pending their discussion, our conclusion as to Messianic predictions can only be provisional; but nothing can alter the fact that the oracle concerning Abraham's seed has been fulfilled, or that it has been fulfilled instrumentally through Christ. Whatever His actual character and nature, He was the evening star of the old world and the morning star of

the new. For ages such a mighty son of Isaac and David was looked for, and good men said, 'He will come,' but no prince or prophet said, 'I am the Christ.' At last One stands up to say, 'I that speak unto you am He.' And either by the will of a benignant God, or the working of a malignant and tormenting fate, the nations have received their law from His mouth, and every continent and island is vocal with His praise as the Son of God. His countrymen, who fulfilled their predicted part by despising and putting Him to death, have endured the fate which also was foretold in the loss of their country and the desolation of that temple in which alone their priests could minister and their sacrificial offerings be made. In the midst of time the Person of Christ thus stands as one who fulfilled the most mysterious expectations of antiquity, and has become the foundation on which the modern world has built its hopes. The questions at issue about His Person are therefore very definite and very narrow in their compass, yet they touch the centre and core of the world's religious history. If that centre be not a truth, history is one huge fraud, and the spectre of Pessimism gibes at us in the darkness into which our minds are plunged.

### *Section VIII.—The Prevalence of Divine Elements in the Bible.*

Before proceeding to put these Messianic predictions to their final test by an examination of their asserted fulfilment in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, some remarks may be offered with regard to the prevalence of Divine elements in Scripture. The foregoing predic-

tions have been submitted as samples only of an extensive class; but if these are fairly established, no difficulty can be felt respecting the vast series of prophecies to which they stand related. Careful study may question the soundness of much Rabbinical and Christian exegesis, and may fail to find Messianic allusions in some passages where they are commonly supposed to exist. But when once convinced that the Bible contains predictions which transcend human foresight, the most cautious mind will approve a more receptive standard of criticism than would otherwise be tolerated, and will recognise what is more significant than any separate oracle, viz., that the older Scriptures are saturated with the thought of a future Prince and Saviour, who would establish a kingdom of righteousness and piety in the whole earth.

Furthermore, it should be observed that, although predictive oracles alone have been selected for the purposes of proof, the Divine elements in the Bible cannot be limited to this one form. The existence of true prophecy reflects a more than earthly lustre on the teachings of which it forms an integral part, and enjoins upon all who confess its presence a profound respect for whatever statements or practical lessons may be offered by its human organs. These men nowhere describe themselves, or one another, as infallible in their intellectual judgments or in moral character; but their selection to be the stewards of Divine oracles for the benefit of mankind is a seal upon the truth of their general pretensions, exalts them to a unique place in our esteem, and justifies us in giving an amount of credence to their words which would otherwise be

superstitious. Many of their statements are utterly incapable of proof or disproof; but if reasonably assured that the speakers were called of God to be the religious pioneers of our race, we shall not demand a positive and independent corroboration of every utterance. Being once convinced that they certainly received some oracles from God, we shall not deem it wise or right to suspect them of fraud or illusion when they tell us of other communications, the divinity of which cannot now be demonstrated.

It is often assumed that if it can be shown that a given portion of the Bible might conceivably have been produced by the ordinary use of man's faculties, it is thereby proved to be a human production and nothing more. Such an argument, however, will not bear examination. Without forsaking the position that the Creator is not likely to do for men what they are competent to do for themselves, it is possible to name certain conditions under which He might wisely communicate some truths which were not necessarily undiscoverable by the human intellect.

It is not impossible, nor, to those who regard God as man's Ruler, should it seem improbable, that He would deem it well to deliver oracles of a practical and hortatory character, such as human moralists might conceivably have formulated. This would not be doing what man could do for himself. The decrees of an emperor or the enactments of a Senate may contain nothing in advance of what multitudes previously thought and practised; but as laws they possess a distinct character and function which could not belong to them in any other form. So sundry moral precepts,

said to have been given by the Creator, may be shown to have their precise counterparts in sagacious maxims framed by heathen philosophers, without any real doubt being cast on their Divine publication. The moral commandments of God would presumably correspond to the purest dictates of man's conscience and to the wisest conclusions drawn from experience, but if expressly delivered as divine injunctions, they would impose peculiar obligations on their hearers. This remark has an important bearing on the laws known as the Decalogue. Nearly all these commandments (though assuredly not the first) are such as human wisdom might have devised; and similar precepts are not unknown in heathen literature. But, in opposition to a much reiterated argument, I would submit that this fact does not disprove that such commands were specially communicated to Moses from above, any more than a Royal edict is proved to be spurious by its agreement with popular opinion, or than meteoric stones are proved to have an earthly origin when it is discovered that the elements of which they are composed are such as abound in our own globe. The teaching of the Apostle Paul on this matter is not that the Jews alone were acquainted with the moral law, but that they were placed under peculiar obligations for its fulfilment by the clearness and authority with which it was imparted to them through Moses; and that this special moral responsibility was imposed upon them as chosen exemplars of God's treatment of disobedience, and as the stewards of a Divine revelation of mercy and redemption.

If for such purposes God were to solemnly promul-

gate laws which were already written in the conscience, or were deducible from the facts of experience, He would certainly not be doing what man could do for himself. When, moreover, it is remembered how universally the teachings of conscience have been blurred by ill-usage, and how wofully the lessons of experience have been misread, it can scarcely be accounted superfluous for Him to provide through an inspired lawgiver a clear objective expression of His will, and to enforce its observance upon His chosen servants with exemplary sanctions for a season. It is not now asserted that He did pursue this course, for such an assertion would require to be supported by reasonings for which there is no space. But it is contended that the Divine origin of the moral laws ascribed to God in the Bible cannot be disproved by a mere analysis of their contents. Hence those who are convinced that God has really spoken to men, are within the bounds of reason and probability when they accept as Divine some things which may not be demonstrably superhuman in their nature.

A further reason for accepting this conclusion may be found in the fact that things which are really or apparently within the present powers of human reason may have altogether transcended those powers at an earlier period of history. It is also quite possible that man's existing capacity for religious thought is in part a product of bygone revelations which he is now requested to ignore. The teachings of analogy would certainly encourage the belief that these possibilities coincide with the actual facts of the case. An earthly father reveals to his children many things which in

later life they might readily discover for themselves, but which are none the less indispensable for their earliest guidance. It will also be admitted that, apart from these elementary revelations, the reason would remain in an infantile and almost dormant condition, and so come short of that ability which ultimately seems to make it independent.

It might not be difficult to show that this principle really does apply to the religious education of the race. There are some beautiful and sublime ideas which devout Theists, who deny revelation, seem to regard as having risen up from the wells of consciousness within them, or as the necessary conclusions of the intellect, but which have in fact been inherited through a series of oral or written revelations from historic sources indicated in the Bible. It is true, as Professor Flint has ably proved against Sir John Lubbock,* that no peoples have yet been discovered without some idea of a Superior Power. But it is also true, and is capable of historic proof, that no worthy ideas of God—none which the Theists in question would care to identify with their own, are known to have existed where the influence of Hebrew monotheism was demonstrably or even probably absent. Assuredly no Theist who has been taught by his parents to cherish the scriptural idea of God, or who has read the Bible, or any book in which Biblical ideas are expressed, is entitled to say that he has reached his present position by an independent process of reasoning. He might as well pretend to have discovered for himself that the world is a globe, and that it revolves around the sun because these pro-

* 'Anti-Theistic Theories,' Lecture VII.

positions are now felt to be natural and certain conclusions of the intellect.

The arguments which are intended to establish the sufficiency of human reason to account for worthy Theistic ideas will be found, on examination, only to prove that man is capable of receiving a revelation from either his fellow-man or from God; and that he is so well able to appreciate the beauty and fitness of a great truth when duly offered and reflected upon, that the thing revealed may presently seem to be a necessary conclusion of his intellect, if not an innate idea. Whether man in his present state of culture would be able to think out a satisfactory Theistic theory is a problem we have no means of deciding. No one can say what the residuum would be if the minds, let us say of modern Englishmen, could be swept clear of all the religious ideas they owe to some kind of revelation; and if all the spiritual yearnings, moral sentiments, and social affections which have been engendered or fostered by 'second-hand' beliefs were obliterated or proportionately reduced. What sort of religion an Englishman in this plight would devise it is impossible to imagine, but we may fairly suppose that it would be very unlike the 'Rational Religion' of those Theists who walk in the light of Christianity and declare their independence of its Sun! What they can do, or what they think to be within their present powers, is no criterion of what unaided reason might accomplish. The question is whether, in those early days to which Theism can historically be traced, man could have achieved the task now deemed so easy. Unless this question be answered in the affirmative,

and that answer can be sustained by arguments and evidences such as no one has yet propounded, the probability remains that some truths which men now feel competent to ascertain without a revelation were formerly above man's powers, if they are not actually so now. Hence, if some parts of the Bible are shown to be Divine and others human, we are at least entitled to affirm that our powers are not fine enough to discern a complete line of demarcation between them, and that very much more may be Divine than a believer can prove. We can no more divide the one from the other with precision than an individual can so analyse his own thoughts as to separate the things he has discovered for himself from the things he received from other minds in infancy and youth.

It may be well to call attention to what at first sight may seem a contradiction between these statements and others made on p. 206. It should be noticed that in the previous instance I was considering exclusively the difficulties of Christians, and my endeavour was to show that a believer in the Bible as a God-given book can, for all practical purposes, discern between the Divine and human in its contents. In this place I have in view the criticisms of those to whom a 'Thus saith the Lord' has no weight. The question here is not what a believer can find out for his own satisfaction, and by methods which to faith are quite legitimate, but what he can do in the way of proof for other minds; and the object is to show that he is not irrational when, having found some oracles which manifestly exhibit superhuman knowledge, he also reveres as 'the Word of God' many other utterances, the

nature of which cannot be demonstrated in the same way.

One other reason for concluding that some things may be Divine which are not demonstrably superhuman has yet to be stated. Not only does the power of discovering and expressing religious truth vary in different ages of the world, and in different stages of individual growth, but the power of perceiving what has already been discovered and expressed varies also.

In no department of knowledge can any instructor show us what our faculties have not been appropriately or sufficiently exercised to discern. The most luminous writer on mathematical science cannot demonstrate an advanced theorem to one who is still struggling to cross the *pons asinorum*. It requires scholarship to discern the highest marks of culture in an author or orator, although the untutored may feel his superiority. The multitude may admire a fine painting or statue, but only artistic taste and technical knowledge can discriminate the more delicate marks of transcendent genius. The finest poems may have wondrous charm for immature and undisciplined minds, but only those who have passed through manifold experiences of joy and sorrow can recognise the mastery of a great poet over the workings of human passion, or be filled with 'exquisite music' when his words play with mystic touch upon the highest chords of emotional thought. If this be so in relation to the works of human learning and art, a similar preparedness must be required for the discernment of many things which appeal to man's more spiritual faculties. Most men feel the beauty and

moral power of the old Hebrew psalmists and prophets, but only those who have undergone some agonizing moral conflicts, and have lifted up 'lame hands of faith' to seize the help of One who knows and pities, yet is Holy, can read the deeper meanings of their language. The men who most freely find in them the teachings of God are they who have long striven to speak to Him who is invisible, and have waited with humbled hearts and troubled souls for answer. The evidence which most intensely satisfies such natures can never be transferred. They declare that while they read the Bible its words become like eyes which read their thoughts, and like lips which speak to their hearts with most amazing power. Writers who have lain in foreign graves for ages seem more familiar with their secret things than are their most intimate companions, and have so truly anticipated their deepest thoughts as to provide a language for otherwise unutterable groanings of remorse and prayer, and for yearnings of hope and love and praise which had else been dumb. As they close the book and arise to do its commandments, they find themselves beset by the outward difficulties and the inward infirmities of which it has forewarned them. The more thoroughly they obey its harder sayings, the deeper is their peace of mind, and the calmer their assurance of fellowship with One 'that confirmeth the word of His servant, and performeth the counsel of His messengers.'

To men who thus put the Bible to the severest imaginable test—the test of practical obedience in momentous business—the book becomes more like a living Counsellor and Friend than a printed volume. Its words

become more precious than their necessary food, because the nourishment of pure affections, great purposes, high courage, and exalted hopes. In sorrow they are fraught with consolation, and in joy with sobering wisdom. In the hour of failure they whisper thoughts of new and eternal possibilities; in victory they preach humbleness; in the midst of conflict they are like the voice of a great commander calling to his troops; while to the wounded who lie prone upon the battlefield their tones are tenderly compassionate, yet full of healing mercy and reviving hope. To those who have experienced these things, mere logical proofs of superhuman knowledge in the Bible are irksome and needless. To those who know of them only by report, no exposition can convey such impressions as they produce.

It may be demurred by readers who lack such convictions, that these private and incommunicable persuasions have no logical place in this discussion. It is freely conceded that they are not direct evidence of Divine elements in the Bible; they are expressly introduced as things 'which never can be proved;' but they have, notwithstanding, a distinct logical value. In discussing the chemical or medicinal properties of a given substance, investigators will not shut their eyes to any effects which it is alleged to have produced. If those who eat or drink of it, or apply it to their bodies externally, profess themselves to be thereby pained or comforted, science will not refuse to register their experience. But if some analyst were to ridicule their experience because of his inability to explain it, or because, owing to some different conditions of

health, he may feel no similar effects, the persons who have made repeated experiments will be justly commended for abiding in their own beliefs. On the same principle, the testimony of those who make the Bible their chief study and their supreme guide will not be passed over by a 'rational sceptic' as uninstructive. The intense conviction of Divine enlightenment, invigoration, comfort, guidance, and moral constraint which grows up in the minds of myriads of Christian men and women is a phenomenon of unparalleled character, and should command the respectful attention of all who would study the mystery of human life in a scientific spirit. It forbids hasty denials, and counsels patient study of the facts in that childlike spirit which Science and Faith unite to approve. It also powerfully recommends such a practical experiment in the way of life prescribed by the Bible as will correspond to those physical tests whereby theories are verified in the sphere of material things. Whatever value, however, may be attached to the prevalence of such a conviction by a too self-reliant criticism, those who have attained it would be utterly irrational if they consented to renounce the accumulated teachings of experience.

At the close of Section II. it was observed that the phenomena there indicated have never been accounted for except on the supposition that a Higher Mind presided over the production of the Bible, but that their chief importance could only be seen in conjunction with some other facts. We are now in a position to take a somewhat wider view, although the force of what is said at this stage will be immeasurably increased

if the propositions which still await discussion are established.

When the actual presence of Divine oracles in the Bible has been established to our satisfaction, the surprising unity of its collected books assumes a new significance. The phenomena which have already been exhibited seem in any case to indicate that the authors of these books were inspired and supervised by one Mind, which remained while they were changed, and still taught them each their portion as they went from birth to death, and passed in slow procession down the ages. But when it is found that these men, so widely sundered by gulfs of time and seas of changing circumstance, were bound together as fellow-workers, not only by those links which have been reviewed, but by a mysterious power of anticipation, that unity becomes unspeakably significant. We have seen not only that the later writers of Scripture quote and supplement the utterances of their predecessors, but also that the earlier writers foretell events which in part their successors describe and attest as eye-witnesses, and in part repeat and amplify as fellow-prophets century after century, and in the face of the most terrible discouragements. We have seen that, taken altogether, these authors furnish not only, as formerly stated, a coherent conception of the past and prospective history of the human race, but also a true and vivid prediction of events which are still being wrought out in world-wide transformations of thought and life, and by the precise agency foretold. The unity which thus includes the gradual unfolding of such superhuman knowledge draws a circle of consecra-

tion round the entire production which we call the Bible. It does not require us to believe, nor does it even suggest, that its Divine contents have reached us without bearing traces of the human channels through which the communication comes; but it surely warrants the conclusion that the book as a whole is God's gift to mankind; that, with all its characteristics, it is what He meant it to be; and that wherein it may partake of human limitations, this also is by His permission, and because in His sight it is more useful so than otherwise. The ascertained existence of heavenly treasure in an 'earthen vessel' does not exempt the vessel from earthly conditions when it happens to be a book, any more than in the estimation of the prophets and apostles their abundant revelations made them infallible as men. But the presence of such a treasure in a volume so remarkably prepared for its gradual impartation, and subsequent preservation and dissemination, may well be deemed to sanctify that book, and to make it as a whole most truly sacred in the eyes of men.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

So many vague and sweeping statements have been made in recent years about the mythical character of the gospels, that it may not be superfluous to show how certain and definite is our knowledge of the main facts of Christ's life, and how exclusively the more scholarly assailants of the gospel narratives restrict their attack to alleged supernatural elements.

Renan, in the introduction to his 'Life of Jesus,' writes an eloquent paragraph in which he declares how a residence in Palestine impressed him with the intense and veracious realism of the gospel narratives. 'I have traversed,' he observes, 'in all directions, the country of the gospels; I have visited Jerusalem, Hebron, and Samaria; scarcely any important locality of the history of Jesus has escaped me. All this history, which at a distance seems to float in the clouds of an unreal world, thus took a form, a solidity, which astonished me. The striking agreement of the texts with the places, the marvellous harmony of the gospel ideal with the country which served it as a framework, were like a revelation to me. I had before my eyes a fifth gospel, torn, but still legible, and henceforward, through the recitals of Matthew and

Mark, in place of an abstract being, whose existence might have been doubted, I saw living and moving an admirable human figure. During the summer, having to go up to Ghazir, in Lebanon, to take a little repose, I fixed in rapid sketches the image which had appeared to me, and from them resulted this history.'*

Renan is not alone in feeling the matchless charm of the picture drawn by the four evangelists, or the irresistible conviction that their portrait was painted from real life. The peculiarity of his position is that he should ask the world to receive a 'fifth gospel,' written by a Parisian of the nineteenth century, as more credible and trustworthy than either of those written by Hebrews in the first, and written so admirably as to make Christ live before his own sceptical eyes with intense vividness in the very spot where any marks of untruthfulness would have become more apparent.

Such a statement from so prejudiced a quarter is not without its value, but the historic quality of the gospels is independent of any such admissions. The Jews themselves have never disputed the life and death of Jesus, or that He did many mighty works, and was crucified when Pilate was governor of Jerusalem. Renan accepts the celebrated passage in Josephus in which he refers to Jesus: but as its genuineness has been impugned, it may be left unquoted. The opinions of Jewish writers, however, have been freely expressed, and the testimony of loving disciples is corroborated by the witness of bitter foes. For centuries the Rabbins continued to write of Christ with venomous

* 'Life of Jesus,' p. 31.

hatred, and to ascribe His miracles to Satanic agency, as the evangelists tell us their fathers did during His lifetime. In the present day, at any rate in England, a more Christlike treatment of the Jewish people seems to have been answered by a kindlier and humbler attitude on their part towards Christ. Many take great interest in the gospels, and esteem the crucifixion of Jesus a crime of crimson dye.

Besides the testimony of Jews, Latin authors may be cited, who, as Pagans, offer a third and independent body of evidence. Suetonius, referring to an Imperial edict issued in the year A.D. 53, states that Claudius 'expelled the Jews from Rome' because 'constantly raising disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus.' Tacitus, writing of Nero's persecution, enters more into detail. Charged by the Roman people with the crime of setting fire to the city, this infamous tyrant sought to fasten the guilt of his own act upon Christians. Concerning this Tacitus observes: 'Christus, the founder of that name, was put to death as a criminal by Pontius Pilate, Procurator of Judea, in the reign of Tiberius; but the pernicious superstition, repressed for a time, broke out again, not only through Judea, where the mischievous sect arose, but through the city of Rome also, whither all things horrible and disgraceful flow from all quarters as to a common receptacle, and where they are encouraged. Accordingly, first those were seized who confessed they were Christians; next, on their information, a vast multitude were convicted, not so much on the charge of burning the city, as of hating the human race. In their deaths they were also made the subjects of sport, for they were covered

with the hides of wild beasts, and worried to death by dogs, or set fire to, and when day declined were used as torches to illumine the darkness of night.'*

Commenting on this passage, Gibbon remarks: 'The most sceptical criticism is obliged to accept the truth of this extraordinary fact, and the integrity of this celebrated passage of Tacitus. The former is confirmed by the diligent and accurate Suetonius . . . . the latter by the consent of the most ancient manuscripts; by the inimitable character of the style of Tacitus; by his reputation, which guarded the text from the interpolations of pious fraud; and by the purport of his narration, which accused the first Christians of the most atrocious crimes without insinuating that they possessed any miraculous or even magical powers above the rest of mankind.'†

It is needless to discuss here the baselessness of the accusations repeated by Tacitus. The animus he displays renders his evidence the more valuable in some respects, and no one now imagines that the primitive Christians were enemies to mankind, as he supposed. This testimony might suffice for our purpose, but it may be strengthened by the words of the younger Pliny, in which he gives a more observant account of the characters of the early followers of Christ.

In the earliest dawn of the second century, only some seventy years after the death of Christ, this Pliny, who was one of the most accomplished men of his age, was a pro-consul in Asia Minor, and so became responsible for the execution of certain repressive laws

* Tacitus, 'The Annals,' Book XV., Chap. xlv.

† Gibbon, 'Decline and Fall,' Vol. II., Chap. xvi.

issued by Trajan against Christians. In the course of his work he was much perplexed by the number and harmlessness of these people, and he wrote a letter to the Emperor for advice. This letter (dated Nicomedia A.U.C. 856), though often referred to, is seldom read. It is well worthy of quotation as a whole, but only portions can be given here:

'It is, Sire, a rule which I prescribe to myself, to consult you upon all difficult occasions. For who can better direct my doubts or instruct my ignorance? I have never been present at the resolutions taken concerning the Christians, therefore I know not for what causes or to what degree our complaints may be carried on against them. . . . . Are those who repent to be pardoned? Or is it to no purpose to renounce Christianity after having once professed it? Must they be punished for the name, although otherwise innocent? Or is the name itself so flagitious as to be punishable?' After describing his previous method of investigation, he observes: 'Soon afterwards the crime, as it often happens, by being pursued became more diffusive. . . . .'

Describing certain accused persons who recanted, he states:

'All these worshipped your image, and the images of the gods; and they even vented imprecations against Christ: they affirmed that the sum total of their fault or of their error consisted in their assembling upon a certain stated day before it was light, to sing alternately among themselves hymns to Christ, as to a god: binding themselves by oath not to be guilty of any wickedness, not to steal, nor to rob, nor to commit

adultery, nor to break their faith when plighted, nor to deny the deposits in their hands whenever called upon to restore them. These ceremonies performed, they usually departed, and came together again to take a repast, the meat of which was innocent, and eaten promiscuously: but they had desisted from this custom since my edict, wherein, by your commands, I had prohibited all public assemblies.'

Respecting the more staunch professors, he relates:

'I thought it more necessary to try to gain the truth, even by torture, from two women who were said to officiate at their worship. But I could discover only an obstinate kind of superstition carried to a great excess. And therefore, postponing any resolution of my own, I have waited the result of your judgment. To me an affair of this sort seems worthy of your consideration, principally from the multitude involved in the danger. For many persons of all ages, of all degrees, and of both sexes, are already, and will be constantly, brought into danger by these accusations. Nor is this superstitious contagion confined only to the cities; it spreads itself through the villages and the country. As yet I think it may be stopped and corrected. It is very certain that the temples, which were almost deserted, now begin to fill again, and the sacred rites, which have been a long time neglected, are again performed. The victims, which hitherto had few purchasers, are now sold everywhere. From hence we may easily infer what numbers of people might be reclaimed if there was a proper allowance made for repentance.'

To this epistle the Emperor replied in a letter which has also been preserved, commending the pro-consul's procedure, and assenting to his counsels of moderation.*

Apart from any Christian records, it is therefore certain on Jewish and Pagan evidence that Jesus Christ lived at the time and place stated in the New Testament. It is also certain that about seventy years after His death His followers were so numerous throughout the cities and country districts of Asia Minor that the Pagan temples were almost deserted, until persecution began to drive the people back to their forsaken devotions. It is also clear from Pliny's letter that Jesus was then worshipped as Divine, that His disciples were accustomed to observe a simple meal as a religious ordinance, and that they were notable for their strict views of truth, chastity, and other moral duties. We also know that so far from Pliny's expectation that these people could be put down proving correct, they continued so to multiply, that two centuries later the Emperor Constantine saw it expedient to profess himself a Christian as a means of attaching to himself the strongest party in his empire.

We have now to examine the testimony of Christian writers to their Master.

Of late years the most strenuous efforts have been made to damage the credit of John's gospel. For a time its composition late in the second century was treated as an established fact; but little by little the date of its production has been carried back by hard, critical warfare, until now not more than twenty years

* Pliny's 'Letters,' Book X., Epistles xcvii. and xcviii.

remain in dispute between those who say John wrote it at the close of the first century, and those who labour to prove its post-apostolic origin. To avoid encumbering these pages with a long discussion of this still debated point, the gospel of John will not be quoted or relied upon as evidence. This abstention from its use must not be regarded as an admission that the genuineness of the gospel is fairly open to question. The exclusion, however, of this fourth witness to Christ from our discussion will not only avert a lengthy review of the argument, but will incidentally disprove the often reiterated charge that the Christian Church can only vindicate her exalted faith in Jesus as the Son of God by appealing to the discourses contained in John.*

With regard to the first three gospels the most opposite and contradictory theories have been maintained with dogmatic certainty by adepts in the 'higher criticism.' Mark is now generally esteemed the earliest,

* For admirable reviews of the controversy the reader is referred to Godet's 'Commentary on John' (Introduction), and to that of Canon Westcott. As opinions expressed by men well known for their free criticism of Scripture, the following extracts are not without weight. Matthew Arnold, in his 'God and the Bible' (p. 22), observes: 'Tried fairly, then, and without a preconceived theory to warp our criticism, the fourth gospel comes out no fancy piece, but a serious and invaluable document, full of incidents given by tradition and genuine sayings of our Lord.' Ewald, in his 'History of Israel' (Vol. VI., p. 145, note), observes: 'Whoever considers that the fourth gospel is a spurious work ascribed to John has not learnt to distinguish between original and not original, old and new books, and between books written in a simple inartificial style and those written artificially in the name of a more famous author or holy man. The fourth gospel does not bear a single trace of having been written in another's name.'

and his gospel is assigned to a date prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. Luke, mainly because it contains an explicit reference to the Roman siege, is assigned to a rather later date, somewhere about A.D. 80. Matthew is thought to have been written earlier than Luke, and probably before A.D. 70. As to the sources from whence the Evangelists derived their information, criticism is in a similar position to that of the Roman Catholic Church when two rival Infallibilities asserted their claims to the Papacy. Germans mostly believe that all three followed a more ancient written gospel. Most English writers affirm a common oral tradition, or a triple tradition. The notion that these gospels are late compilations, and may have been written in the second century, is one which no well-qualified critic, however antagonistic to Christianity, now entertains.

But these three documents which purport to tell the life of Christ are not the earliest Christian testimony now extant. Some of Paul's epistles are from fifteen to twenty years older than either of them, and the genuineness of the most important of his letters has never been doubted. The Epistles addressed to the Romans, the Galatians, and the Corinthians, are allowed on all hands to be the actual writings of the Apostle Paul, and to have been composed within a period of some twenty to thirty years after the death of Christ. Now, it is impossible to read these letters to Gentile and European Churches without seeing that they take for granted a familiar knowledge of Christ's life on the part of their readers, and of just such a life as Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John portray. We know, therefore, with historic certainty, that within twenty or thirty

years of Christ's death His religion had escaped from Jewish trammels, and had so far broken down the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile as to form mixed communities. Those epistles alone prove that within that short space of time Paul, who was not one of the original disciples, had been converted, had flung off his Pharisaic prejudices, and had spent a number of years in preaching the gospel as summarized by himself in 1 Corinthians xv. They prove that Paul believed, and had convinced many Greeks, that a murdered Jew was the Son of God, that He had been raised from the grave, and exalted to heaven as a Prince and a Saviour, and that He would come once more to judge the world. They show that the Lord's supper was observed precisely as it is observed now, viz., as a memorial of Christ's sufferings, as a pledge of fidelity to Him, as a bond of love amongst His followers, and as a prophetic sign of His return. They show that Christ was believed by Paul to have wrought miracles, and also to have given a select few, including himself, miraculous powers. They show that the Apostle taught a doctrine of the Holy Spirit in full harmony with those discourses in John which are most assailed as the invention of a later age. Romans viii. and 1 Corinthians xii. contain all the most transcendental and so-called mystical doctrines of Christ's spiritual indwelling in His disciples, which John reports as having been spoken on the night when Jesus was betrayed. Paul, as an independent witness, therefore, carries back the most important and, to hostile criticism, the most difficult elements of the four gospels to a date close up to Christ's death.

It is very significant also that Paul had never been

in Rome when he wrote to the church in that city. It had not been founded by his preaching, and yet he knows that its members have the same faith in Christ as the Corinthians. He apologizes for not having visited them long before, and declares that their high Christian character was talked of throughout the world. Another significant fact is that already at so early a time Paul has occasion to complain that his teachings have been misunderstood and perverted; that divisions have crept into the Churches; and that some members have shown the shallowness of their sympathy with Christ by refusing to endure the restraints of righteousness. These letters also show that the Churches were beset from without by elaborate and well-defined objections; and these objections, when analyzed, prove to have been directed against those lofty claims on behalf of Christ which we are asked to believe were the product of a later age. The argument of the letter to the Romans proves that the authority of Christ to supersede the statute law of Moses had been long asserted by Christians, and bitterly resented by Jews. It shows that Christ's authority to forgive sins and to say, 'Thy faith hath saved thee,' was a familiar and fundamental doctrine, and that the Jews denounced it as a sign of immorality and lawlessness, just as the Evangelists say their countrymen attacked it when Christ was alive. Some of the more abstruse chapters are a logical vindication of Christ's authority to take the kingdom from the Jews and give it to other nations, as He Himself is described by the Evangelists as announcing His intention in various parables and discourses.

These Pauline epistles show, therefore, that Christ's claim to be the long-expected Messiah and to fulfil the ancient Hebrew scriptures was no late invention, but an original doctrine on which the gospel was based. They carry back all the superhuman claims which the Evangelists ascribe to Christ to a time immediately following His death. In the superhuman elements of these four authors, therefore, we have not to deal with myths which took some forty or fifty years to mature. They are elements which, whether true or false, are traceable to the earliest apostolic preaching.

We have thus, on independent Jewish, Pagan, and Christian authority, found that the main facts of Christ's public ministry as a religious teacher, and His crucifixion by Pilate, are solid verities, no more to be doubted than the death of Socrates in his Athenian prison, or the murder of Cæsar in the Roman Senate; and we also know, before approaching the gospel narratives, that by some means Christ produced precisely such an impression concerning His goodness, wisdom, dignity, and Divine Sonship as the Evangelists seek to convey. This conclusion assigns definite limits to the questions still to be discussed. Seeing that the main outlines of Christ's life as told by the Evangelists are proved to be historic, we have to ask whether the reported words and works of Christ have also been honestly recorded; if not, are the narratives enriched with legendary stories of miraculous works and invented words; or, as some suppose, are the words authentic, while only the miracles have been falsely fitted into the true historic outline of His life? Or, yet again, were spurious miracles foisted upon the

credulous Apostles by the wilful imposture of their Master?

With regard to most of the alleged words of Christ, there is scarcely any dispute. It is confessed by all men capable of judging that the sayings of Jesus are so unique in their character, that to allege that men like the Evangelists invented them, is to affirm a miracle. Even Strauss did not impugn the reported sayings of Jesus. Some of the discourses in John, and some of the prophetic discourses in Luke, are dismissed as incredible, but the genuineness of Christ's conversations is not doubted by anyone whose views deserve attention. Every thinker recognises that there must have been something in Christ to fire men with enthusiasm, to extort homage, and to purify character. Such moral and intellectual effects as have notoriously been produced do not start into existence uncaused, and those who repudiate miracles are compelled to find in the sublimity and moral excellence of Christ's teachings, and in the fervour of His love for the poor, and sinful, and sick, the necessary element of fact by which to account for His influence over men. On this point the views of Mill are worthy of notice. 'Whatever else, he observes, 'may be taken away from us by rational criticism, Christ is still left, a unique figure, not more unlike all His precursors than all His followers, even those who had the direct benefit of His personal teaching. It is of no use to say that Christ, as exhibited in the gospels, is not historical, and that we know not how much of what is admirable has been superadded by the tradition of His followers. The tradition of followers may have inserted all the miracles

which He is reputed to have wrought. But who among His disciples or among their proselytes was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the gospels? Certainly not the fishermen of Galilee; as certainly not St. Paul, whose character and idiosyncracies were of a totally different sort; still less the early Christian writers, in whom nothing is more evident than that the good that was in them was all derived, as they always professed that it was derived, from the higher source.'*

From such a quarter, this testimony to the inimitable quality of Christ's words is of much value. Whether the undoubted words can be separated from the disputed works of Christ, as Mill too easily assumed, has now to be considered.

A careful examination of the narratives will discover that the alleged miracles are so organically connected with the words, that they can no more be removed so as to leave a consistent human story, than the veins can be taken out of a marble bust without destroying the likeness, or than a surgeon can take out a patient's bones, and leave his figure unimpaired. Many of the most important sayings and conversations are started by, and are concerned about, professed miracles. The sudden fame of Christ is unaccountable except through the rumours of alleged wonderful works. The commotion among the populace, the Pharisees, and priests and rulers, was chiefly produced by Christ's deeds. His fame as a healer of disease and restorer of bodily

* 'Essays on Religion,' p. 453. (The above quotation refers only to the first three gospels.)

wholeness was more influential with the multitude than any ethical or spiritual tuition. These real or pretended works of His were clearly the basis of those expectations which even the mythical and visionary theories of the resurrection are obliged to attribute to the disciples before Christ died. Hence Strauss admits that immense numbers of miraculous cures must have been ascribed to Christ by rumour. Many of these he thinks were real cures, although produced by nervous excitement. The author of 'Ecce Homo' justly said in his chapter on 'Christ's Credentials': 'Waiving, then, for the present the question whether miracles were actually wrought, we may state a fact which is fully capable of being established by ordinary evidence, and which is actually established by evidence as ample as any historical fact whatever, the fact, namely, that Christ professed to work miracles. We may go farther, and assert with confidence that Christ was believed by His followers really to work miracles, and that it was mainly on this account that they conceded to Him the pre-eminent dignity and authority which He claimed.'* Elsewhere this author writes more strongly: 'Nor can it be doubted, by the present writer at least, that He was believed in His lifetime, and not merely after His death, to work miracles. All those circumstances which have been represented as suspicious—His unwillingness to work miracles in certain cases, the contempt He expressed for those whose faith depended exclusively upon them—are strong evidence that the miracles were, at least, no afterthoughts of the biographers, for such circumstances were most unlikely to

* 'Ecce Homo,' p. 43.

occur either in legend or falsification. The fact that Christ appeared as a worker of miracles is the best attested fact in His whole biography, both by the absolute unanimity of all the witnesses, by the confirmatory circumstances just mentioned, and by countless other special confirmations not likely to be invented, striking sayings inseparably connected with them, etc., in particular cases.'*

Renan, also, furnishes striking testimony to the same effect. No man treats the reality of miracles with more summary denial than he, yet he confesses that Jesus undoubtedly did pretend to work them, and that the stories of the synoptic gospels, though incredible now, were really believed by the disciples before their Master died. Thus the words and works of Christ are inseparably bound up together by the admissions of men who were most anxious, and intellectually most competent, to effect their separation, if it were at all possible.

This conclusion sets before us a most decisive issue. When the alleged works of Christ and His admitted words are thus proved inseparable, the moral character of Christ is staked on the genuineness of the works. If He claimed a more than human authority and honour on the strength of superhuman powers as evinced in miracles, His truthfulness and common honesty depend on the reality of those powers. If the works were spurious, Jesus was an impostor and a blasphemer of God, as His enemies asserted. In that case He deserved to die; and of the three malefactors who were crucified together, Jesus would have been

* 'Ecce Homo,' Preface to Fifth Edition, p. x.

immeasurably the worst. If, on the contrary, the works were real, then the claims were well founded, and Jesus is rightly honoured by the Christian Church.

To evade this dilemma, it is sometimes asserted that the Jesus of Matthew, Mark, and Luke is purely human; and that only the Jesus of John claims to be divine.

A brief review of the manner in which the claims of Christ are reported in the first three gospels will prove the fallacy of this idea.

Mark thus records the impression left upon the people by Christ's earliest teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum: 'They were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as having authority, and not as the Scribes' (Mark i. 22). In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ said: 'Blessed are the meek' (Matthew v. 5). But what sort of meekness did Jesus Himself possess, if only human, while arrogating the right to pronounce those beatitudes, and to supersede the teaching of ages, including some portions of the Mosaic law? Throughout the sermon there is a constant use of the pronoun 'I.' The speaker declares His will, and issues His requirements with regal majesty, and as a king whose dominions are as broad as the moral government of God. After upbraiding the cities of Galilee, and declaring that no man knew the Father save the Son, He stretched forth His hands, and uttered those words which have moved the hearts of all generations: 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is

easy, and My burden is light' (Matthew xi. 28-30). Never perhaps was Jesus less meek, if judged by a human standard, than when uttering this marvellous invitation.

In His beatitudes He said: 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness' (Matthew v. 6). He viewed His best hearers as only seekers after righteousness, but He never betrayed the least sign of unsatisfied desire in Himself. He reproved, and sometimes satirized, those who felt no need of repentance; but He never, by word or sign, confessed the consciousness of such a need Himself. He taught men to pray for forgiveness, but He never asked to be forgiven. Even on the cross He said, 'Father, forgive them,' not 'Father, forgive Me.' Nor was this all. He not only refrained from owning any need of clemency, but He claimed to exercise the Divine prerogative of mercy by forgiving sin, and silenced the Scribes, who called this assumption blasphemy, by commanding a palsied man to arise and walk (Mark ii. 5-12). This same claim pervades all Christ's dealings with notorious sinners as narrated throughout the gospels.

Again, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said: 'Judge not, that ye be not judged' (Matthew vii. 1); yet He habitually did what He forbids men to attempt; *i.e.*, He went behind men's words and actions to deal with what He professed to know was in their hearts. Many of His conversations owe their entire character to this professed power of discerning what no man could know. Carrying forward this faculty into the future, Jesus presented Himself as the future judge of

mankind (Matthew vii. 21-23; xxv. 31-46; Mark xiv. 61, 62; Luke xxii. 69, etc.).

In dealing with His disciples, Christ rigorously repressed all attempts to assert, or even seek, superiority over one another (Mark x. 35-45). Yet when He placed a little child in their midst as a pattern of true greatness, He made it a pattern of childlike trust in Himself, and said, 'Whoso shall receive one such little child in My name receiveth Me: but whoso shall cause one of these little ones that believe on Me to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea' (Matthew xviii. 5, 6). He forbade His disciples to be called masters, remarking that, 'Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled,' yet in the same breath declared, 'One is your Master, even the Christ' (Matthew xxiii. 10-12). He claimed for Himself that He was 'Lord of the Sabbath' (Mark ii. 28; Luke vi. 5): and that He was 'greater than the temple,' which, according to the Old Testament scriptures, was God's peculiar dwelling, and the appointed meeting-place between man and God (Matthew xii. 6). He exacted the most unreserved obedience to Himself, the most absolute devotion to His personal service, and the most implicit faith in His word. He treated loyalty to Himself as the evidence of a right state of heart towards God, and assumed the right to promise eternal life and honour to all who should suffer persecution for His sake (Matthew v. 11; Luke xviii. 28-30, etc.). On one occasion a man came saying, 'Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?' and Jesus, to test his thought, said, 'Why

callest thou Me good? None is good save one, even God.' This reply is sometimes quoted as a modest disclaimer of goodness, or of more than human dignity; but reading on, it becomes clear that Christ not only accepted the word 'good,' but expressly and emphatically accepted it as the earthly representative of God. Leaving out the great command to love God with all the heart and soul, He recited the moral precepts of the law; and when the man replied, 'Master, all these have I observed from my youth,' Jesus answered: 'One thing thou lackest: go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow Me' (Mark x. 17-22). Thus Christ deliberately substituted loving consecration to Himself for the first law of Sinai, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.' What pretensions to Divinity can be quoted from John more unmistakable than this? Or, on the supposition that Jesus was a mere man, what could be more blasphemously presumptuous than this claim which Mark preserves?

If we were to quote all that can be found in the three first Gospels savouring of superhuman self-assertion on Christ's part, we should have to quote them almost bodily. Whenever He speaks, He speaks as one above His hearers. If, therefore, we read the Gospel story without detecting these assumptions, it can only be because they so marvellously accord with the personal dignity of the Jesus the evangelists depict, that we unconsciously and without offence accept from Him words which, coming from any other lips, would arouse the most intense indignation. The fact that so many can read these narratives without noticing the

extraordinary assumptions which pervade the words and deeds of Christ is a singular testimony to the perfect symmetry of the portrait. It shows that character, speech, and actions are all upon the same grand scale, harmonizing and blending with each other in faultless proportion and truth. The reported deeds of Christ would be glaring monstrosities but for the quiet sublimity of His speech and the matchless beauty of His spirit. The words of Christ would jar upon our ears as the strains of unparalleled arrogance, but for their accompaniments of wondrous works and the irresistible attraction of a meekness which is not falsified to our hearts by the most exalted tones of authority.

But while the superhuman claims of Christ are often overlooked, they cannot be denied when distinctly pointed out. How, then, are they to be disposed of? How is the difficulty they create dealt with by those who recognise them, yet refuse to regard them as well-founded?

Strauss laboured hard to tone down the facts, but substantially he confessed the difficulty, and tried to evade it by ascribing to Jesus an enthusiastic state of self-deception. According to him, Jesus set Himself to carry out the Messianic programme found in the prophets, and meeting with singular success at the outset, came at length to believe Himself the Messiah; and so He and His disciples, and the populace, were all carried away by an enthusiastic credulity to believe that all their Messianic expectations were being fulfilled. When Strauss came to apply this theory to the details, it landed him in endless absurdities. As an explanation of Christ's life, it is dead. Of such an enthusiasm, there

are no traces. There never was narrated the life of a calmer, more self-possessed being than Jesus. When His disciples betray undue elation, He invariably represses it. When enthusiastic volunteers present themselves, He bids them wait and count the cost. When crowds become excited in His favour, He retreats to the wilderness, or scatters them by hard sayings. His whole public life was maintained in the face of scathing criticism, and under the fierce light of a watchfulness which never lost an opportunity of obstructing His plans, or of insulting His person, and ridiculing His pretensions. His last days witnessed His most exalted claims and sublimest confidence, together with shaken hearts and doubtful minds in His disciples, and intensified scorn and hatred in His enemies. From His baptism to His death no trace of excitement, or fanaticism, or unreasoning fervour can be discovered. The picture is uniformly one of the Man who never suffered a moment's illusion as to the true feelings and thoughts, whether of friends or foes, or as to the certain issue of His own career.

But this is not the chief part of the answer. Even if the facts were not so utterly against it, Strauss's theory fails as an apology for Christ's moral character. Enthusiasm may explain a delirious self-conceit in its later stages; but no man, unless a lunatic, ever came to believe himself superhuman, except as the sequel to a course of conscious self-flattery, and a despicable acceptance of fulsome praise from those he stooped to court. If a man is given up to believe such a lie about himself, it can only be as a moral retribution for having, first of all, deceived others. Renan, in his 'Life of Jesus,'

clearly recognises this position. He borrows the idea of enthusiastic self-deception, but he does not pretend for a moment that this alters the moral conditions. He takes the view of a 'Parisian man-of-the-world,' whose conscience is as volatile as his imagination. He admits that Christ laid claim to miraculous powers and superhuman authority, but without a blush applauds the boldness and genius of Christ's successful imposture, as a mark of superiority to all the pitiful scruples of feebler men, and elaborately traces the process by which imposture develops into self-deceit. These are his words: 'An absolute conviction, or rather the enthusiasm, which freed Him from even the possibility of doubt, shrouded all these boldnesses. We little understand, with our cold and scrupulous natures, how anyone can be so entirely possessed by the idea of which He has made Himself the apostle. To the deeply earnest races of the West, conviction means sincerity to one's self. But sincerity to one's self has not much meaning to Oriental peoples, little accustomed to the subtleties of a critical spirit. Honesty and imposture are words which, in our rigid consciences, are opposed as two irreconcilable terms. In the East they are connected by numberless subtle links and windings . . . . The literal truth has little value to the Oriental; he sees everything through the medium of his ideas, his interests, and his passions. History is impossible, if we do not fully admit that there are many standards of sincerity. All great things are done through the people; now we can only lead the people by adapting ourselves to its ideas. The philosopher who, knowing this, isolates and fortifies himself in his

integrity, is highly praiseworthy. But he who takes humanity with its illusions, and seeks to act with it and upon it, cannot be blamed. . . . It is easy for us, who are so powerless, to call this falsehood, and, proud of our timid honesty, to treat with contempt the heroes who have accepted the battle of life under other conditions. When we have effected by our scruples what they accomplished by their falsehoods, we shall have the right to be severe upon them. At least, we must make a marked distinction between societies like our own, where everything takes place in the light of reflection, and simple and credulous communities, in which the beliefs that have governed ages have been born. Nothing great has been established which does not rest on a legend. The only culprit in such cases is the humanity which is willing to be deceived.'*

Of all the insults ever heaped on the head of Jesus, this passage is one of the most atrocious. Such immoral praises constitute a crown of thorns sharper than those woven by the Roman soldiers. They are more disgraceful than any spitting, and a robe of honour more full of mockery than the purple imitation of Cæsar's. But the insult is not limited to Christ. It is cast on all readers of Renan's book, because we are invited to worship a deceiver, not merely in spite of, but because of his deceit. In other parts of his book Renan speaks of Jesus as the Man in whom 'was condensed all that is good and elevated in our nature.' 'Let us,' he exclaims, 'place then the person of Jesus at the highest summit of human greatness' (p. 305), and putting on his mantle of prophecy, he closes his fifth

* 'Life of Jesus,' p. 186.

gospel by saying, 'Whatever may be the unexpected phenomena of the future, Jesus will not be surpassed. His worship will constantly renew its youth, the tale of His life will cause ceaseless tears, His sufferings will soften the best hearts: all the ages will proclaim that among the sons of men there is none born who is greater than Jesus.' But every uncorrupted mind will affirm that, if Jesus was such a 'Jesuit' as Renan depicts, there have been many greater than He. Millions of His disciples have been inspired, by what they believed His spirit, to accept obscurity, odium, or death, rather than pander to the populace, or to kings, or priests, for the sake of influence, power, or place. Jesus would have been a greater man had He never left the bench in Nazareth, but had gone down to the grave a truthful carpenter, than if He had really emerged from that low estate to climb the world's loftiest pedestal by guile. Happily the general conscience of mankind has not sunk so low as Renan seems to imagine. If mankind should ever be persuaded that Jesus did not fulfil at least this part of the ancient Messianic ideal, 'He did no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth,' the last chapter of Christian history will be swiftly closed, and some mournful hand will write at the foot of each evangel, 'The praises of Jesus, the son of David, are ended.'

From the immoral eulogy of alleged immorality it is positively refreshing to pass to Mr. Francis Newman's treatment of the difficulty. Having rejected Christ's claim to superhuman dignity and authority, and being reluctantly brought to admit with Renan that these pretensions were really made by Jesus, Mr. Newman

had the courage to denounce these pretensions as immoral. The chapter in his 'Phases of Faith,' entitled the 'Moral Perfection of Jesus,' has been called 'the very floor of Pandemonium,' because some Christians have felt that no lower depth could be sounded. According to a truer judgment, it is out of all comparison less obnoxious than the passage quoted from Renan. It does homage to eternal principles of righteousness, and at least spares Christ the indignity of being magnified as a brilliant sinner. It has also the merit of complying with Christ's challenge to His accusers in His earthly lifetime: 'Either make the tree good and the fruit good, or make the tree corrupt and its fruit corrupt, for the tree is known by its fruit.'

To form a just estimate of the painful chapter under notice, it must be remembered that Mr. Newman wrote it in compliance with repeated demands. He wrote it most reluctantly, and called it an 'odious task.' His friend, Dr. James Martineau, in particular challenged him to show his data for holding, against the almost universal judgment of good men, the moral imperfection of Jesus. Dr. Martineau, like many Unitarians of the past or expiring generation, intensely reveres Christ as a faultless person, while regarding Him as liable to error, and discrediting the gospel of John. But Mr. Francis Newman, like Miss Martineau, saw clearly that this position was untenable, and having renounced faith in Christ's Divinity, was prepared to give his reasons for passing by the Unitarian camp. Before beginning his task, he explains that no so-called 'orthodox' Christian need feel shocked at his charges, because the defects to be cited are only defects on the supposition

that Jesus was human. 'In fact,' he observes, 'the same action or word in Jesus may be consistent or inconsistent with moral perfection, according to the previous assumptions concerning His person.* Working on this well-defined foundation, he proceeds to demonstrate from the synoptic gospels that Jesus claimed to exercise superhuman authority, and both demanded and received such honours, and obedience, and devotion as are due only to the Divine Being. Having displayed at length what he esteems the false and arrogant assumptions of Jesus, he states as his conclusion, 'that in consistency of goodness, Jesus fell far below vast numbers of His unhonoured disciples.' Granting that Jesus was only a man, there can be no escape from this conclusion. The only logical or moral objection which can then be urged against it, is that it is far too feeble a verdict to follow so heavy an indictment. If Christ's assumptions were false, He was an utterly bad man, and His severest condemnation would be found in the purity of the moral sentiments He preached to others, but systematically violated in His own career. Unless His claims were valid His condemnation was just, and His judges, instead of being execrated by mankind, are blameless.

The dilemma to which we are thus reduced is one which multitudes shrink from deciding. With an intellectual prepossession against the admission of miracles or the recognition of a superhuman visitant to our earth, they have also an unalterable sympathy with the centurion who exclaimed, 'Surely this was a righteous man.' It is apparent on every page that Mr. Newman's

* 'Phases of Faith,' p. 141.

own heart was wrung by this inward conflict. His mild conclusion that Jesus fell below many of His disciples in 'consistency of goodness,' may have been moderated in part by an honourable regard for the feelings of Christians; but in writing it he was also evidently restrained by an uneasy feeling akin to Pilate's, when called upon to judge a man whose presence smote him with a mystic awe. There is nothing rare in this reluctant reverence for Christ. Since the armed men fell back at His glance, in the garden of Gethsemane, it has been a common thing for opponents to quail under the spell of His unrivalled beauty and holiness. In spite of all the difficulties of reconciling the goodness of Jesus with any humanitarian theory of His person, multitudes who will not worship Him as Lord bow down before Him as the 'fairest of the sons of men.' It is inconsistent; it is absurd; but it is irresistible, for the heart of man will not listen to any cold pleadings of the intellect, and rises up against all accusations to confirm the verdict of his Roman judge: 'I find in Him no fault at all.'

In studying the Messianic prophecy contained in Isaiah liii., it was shown that there are only two ways of resisting the conclusion that in that chapter we have a verified oracle of God. It must either be shown that the Gospel narratives are not true, or that Jesus impersonated the character of the expected Messiah with an actor's skill. We are now in a position to say that the first of these two methods is a failure. It has been ascertained that the gospels contain a true account of the career of Jesus Christ, and that they set before us with unrivalled vigour and beauty a life-

like picture of Him as He appeared to His enemies and friends. Unless, therefore, we are prepared to say with Renan and Newman that Christ was a deceiver of the people, we must allow that almost all the special features of the prophetic portrait were marvellously fulfilled in His person. The absolute sinlessness of Christ as a spiritual fact could only be demonstrated evidently by One who was acquainted with all the secrets of His heart from birth to death. But He certainly betrayed no consciousness of sin, and no fault has ever been found in Him which in the faintest degree militates against His claims, because it is only the making of these superhuman claims which is alleged against Him. Millions have felt that the character of Christ is the one pure and perfect thing in human story, and those who have imitated Him most assiduously have proved themselves to be the salt and light of the earth. The purer His disciples become, the more beauty they see in Him; the more self-denying they become, the more they admire that prolonged sacrifice which was consumed as by fire upon the cross. If men do not discern the beauty of Christ, and if, being once assured that the gospels are true, they are not inwardly convinced that in Jesus of Nazareth there was no guile, they are to be compassionated, but are no more to be reasoned with than are men who lift up eyeless sockets towards the sun and say, 'We see no light.'

Granting the guilelessness of Christ, there are only two of the nine special features of the Messianic picture previously enumerated (p. 236) which need further remark. The renewed life of Jesus is reserved

for consideration in the following chapter, and His intercessory work must await the provings of another state of existence. If Christ has prolonged His days, and is still pleading for transgressors as He prayed for them with His dying breath, that work is carried on beyond the reach of human knowledge. Some things, however, are indisputably certain. Within a few weeks of His death Christ was declared to be alive again, and He has since been believed in by an increasing multitude as 'alive for evermore.' The thought of Christ continuing in heaven that work of the Lord which death seemed to close so disastrously has been the strength and stay of innumerable hosts. Viewed in relation to ancient prophecy, these earthly results which have followed Christ's career are more marvellous and perplexing on the supposition that He did not rise from the dead than the occurrence of His resurrection would be as a central fact in the midst of such mysterious phenomena. Around the grave of Christ the most wonderful events of time are clustered; and our final task must be to ask whether the unique and radiant Being whose body was laid in that unsullied tomb was really holden of death, or whether, in this Son of Man, man's last enemy was overcome.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

THE first attempt to account for the alleged Resurrection of Christ, without admitting a miracle, was made by Celsus, an Epicurean philosopher, who wrote in the latter half of the second century. His theory was that Jesus did not really die, but was laid in the grave in a state of suspended animation. Logically, therefore, as well as historically, this contention demands our earliest consideration, because, unless there was a true death, there can be no need to discuss those theories which concede the decease but deny the revival of Jesus.

The most obvious objection to this notion is that it is a pure fabrication, all the evidence upon the subject which remains—Jewish, Pagan, and Christian—being distinctly to the effect that Jesus was effectually put to death. Roman executioners were well able to do their work, and Jewish eyes would scarcely fail to see that it was done. The few modern writers who support the theory of Celsus, feebly urge that crucifixion was a slow death, and cite vague rumours of wonderful recoveries from the effects of long suspension. Josephus states that he saw several men on crosses when Titus was encamped against Jerusalem, and that he begged for three of them to be taken down and spared. Titus

consented, and one of the trio was restored by medical treatment. Hence it is suggested that one of three may have survived on a more memorable occasion. The story is by no means above suspicion; but the inference to which it points is most unfavourable to the notion it is quoted to sustain. It will be noticed that, according to Josephus, the three men were taken down while confessedly alive, and with enough vitality to give him some hope that all might recover. Yet only one recovered, and that after great care and medical attention. But Jesus was officially declared dead when removed from the cross. What then, by comparison, was His chance of recovery? Again, one witness of the resurrection says that Jesus was pierced after death with a spear by a Roman soldier, and that 'straightway there came out blood and water' (John xix. 34).* This is ridiculed by Strauss and others, because they say blood and water could not, under any circumstances, have gushed out together. It is no doubt true that, in ordinary cases, no blood would flow from a wound made after the circulation had been stopped; and it is also true that only blood, and not blood and water, would gush out from a wound inflicted while the circulation continued. No satisfactory explanation of the phenomenon recorded by John appears to have been published until a very recent date. In 1805 Dr. Gruner propounded the theory that Jesus was not quite dead until the spear-

* I quote here from John because his witness in this sentence is held to be specially damaging to the case he would establish. If, while removing the objection founded upon it, some incidental strength is added to the witness of the other evangelists, it will not be a departure from the intimation given on p. 269, because the death of Christ is otherwise amply attested.

wound was inflicted; but this failed to satisfy scientific critics. In 1847 Dr. Stroud issued his work entitled 'A Physical Treatise on the Cause of the Death of Christ,' in which he demonstrated that when death has been caused by a rupture of the heart, a post-mortem wound which pierces the pericardium will occasion a considerable flow of water. His theory, though for some years widely accepted, failed to account for the flow of blood, and has latterly been rejected by many eminent Christian writers on the subject. But quite recently the Rev. S. Haughton, M.D., has published the results of very careful investigations, in which he supplies all that was lacking in the theory of Dr. Stroud. He shows conclusively that crucifixion so affects the action of the intercostal muscles as to induce in all cases an abnormal lodgment of imperfectly oxidated blood in the lungs; and hence that if the lungs of any crucified person were pierced after death, there would be a flow of dark fluid blood from the wound. If, therefore, as there is every reason to believe, Christ's death was immediately occasioned by a rupture of the substance of the heart after suffering a few hours on the cross, all the conditions must have been present which are needed to account for the phenomenon recorded; and a spear penetrating through the lungs to the heart would produce first blood and then water exactly as John asserts that he beheld at Calvary.* It is evident, on the face of John's narrative, that he was quite aware that the phenomenon of blood and water issuing from a dead body was mysterious. He attests the fact, however, in the most deliberate and

* See the *Church Quarterly Review*, January, 1880.

solemn manner, without any attempt to explain it. The elucidation of this singular physical phenomenon has, however, come at last, and incidentally removes another difficulty from the history. It was always regarded as strange that Christ's death should have occurred in so unusually short a time; but a ruptured heart is the most probable cause of death that can be suggested in view of His intense spiritual anguish, added to His physical injuries; and on the supposition that this really was the case, the brevity of His sufferings, and the unprecedented effect of the post-mortem wound, are not only explained, but their conjunction in a narrative told by a man who knew nothing of their scientific significance is one of those inimitable marks of true description which put hostile criticism to shame.

There is, however, no need to put stress upon this point. If Jesus did not die while still hanging on the cross, it would have to be explained how He survived the wrapping in linen and the entombment. If, contrary to nature, He survived these experiences, we must be informed how He escaped from the sepulchre. The gardener, says one author, must have wanted to move the stone for some purpose, and so liberated Jesus unwittingly! But supposing there were no Roman soldiers on guard, and that Jesus was so fortunate as to survive execution and burial, and to be thus released, other difficulties would remain for explanation.

If the reappearances of Jesus were those of a man recovered from His wounds, some persons must have supplied Him with raiment, for He did not go about in grave-clothes, and most assuredly those He had worn before the execution were not buried by His side. If,

after such fearful sufferings, He could dispense with medical care, He certainly must have needed food and some secure hiding-place; and these not only for the first few days, but for as long as He continued alive. Modern advocates of this theory scorn to deal with such troublesome matters as these, but they expect us to regard it as an explanation of all the narratives of reappearance in the gospels, and so of the disciples' faith in Christ's real resurrection from the dead; nor do they esteem it incompatible with some faith in Him on our part still. If the Christian Church, however, were to found her preaching of Christ on such a theory, the world would speedily denounce the tale as inconsistent with the meanest views of Christ's morality. Enthusiasm cannot account for such a ghastly series of deceptions practised by Him on confiding friends as this implies. It represents Jesus as concealing Himself by the aid of some unknown accomplices, while His chief disciples proclaim that He has ascended to the throne of heaven; and it leaves us to imagine Him either committing suicide in a bath of burning acid, like the veiled prophet sung of by Thomas Moore, or else as dragging out a miserable existence in obscurity, while a false gospel was spreading abroad. We are required to believe, moreover, that all this was done in the name of God, righteousness and truth, and with a most sanctifying effect upon the world!

The mythical theory, which admits the death of Jesus and assumes that belief in His appearances after death was slowly developed in the course of many years, may safely be passed over. Evidence has been advanced to show that a risen and ascended Christ

was preached, believed in, and widely worshipped in the world immediately after He disappeared from human sight, and need not be repeated here. The only theories which remain for consideration and choice are two; viz., the visionary theory, and the faith of the Christian Church that Jesus was raised from the dead by the power of God.

In his second 'Life of Jesus,' Strauss, receding from his original mythical theory, virtually adopted that which treats the appearances of the risen Christ as purely subjective phenomena, produced by the intense love and earnest expectations and desires of the disciples. He made, however, no serious attempt to show how such visions could be explained, or to exhibit their relation to admitted facts. Baur, allowing the phenomena to be indisputable, renounced all hope of explaining them. Keim, the greatest German critic of the negative school, also concedes the phenomena in question, and scathingly exposes the failure of his predecessors to account for them, but leaves the task untried. Where he feared to tread it will require a hardy spirit to make a new adventure. It is easy to wrap the story in a cloud of vague language, and to assume all that most requires to be proved. A little literary art and a tone of confident superiority to such prosaic matters as historic detail may carry an author pleasantly over the rocks of physical impossibility, and over logical gulfs and seas of absurdity, without the miraculous nature of his flight being observed by generous readers. But before the visionary theory can be reasonably accepted, some advocate must instruct us how such visions as are related in the New

Testament could conceivably have happened to such men as the disciples; and how the various moral, mental, and physical difficulties which beset the hypothesis can be disposed of.

The only notable endeavour to achieve this task is that which has made the name of Renan famous. This writer is undoubtedly a man of great learning and genius, and his works have been read wherever Christian literature is known. It is incumbent upon us, therefore, to submit his labours to a fair examination. Renan depicts the disciples as without any definite hope in their first sorrow of bereavement. The words of their Master about His death and its sequel were not yet understood, as they were afterwards led to interpret them by real or imaginary events. But even on the first day Renan thinks they did not renounce all hope, and he invents a plausible train of thought which may have filled those Sabbath hours, and quickly urged them to exclaim, 'He must be living!' On that day, he says, 'they resuscitated Jesus in their hearts by the intense love which they bore Him. They decided that Jesus had not died. . . . Only let a material fact, insignificant of itself, allow the persuasion that His body is no longer here below, and the dogma of the resurrection will be established for ever.'* It will be observed that the dependence of visions on physical facts of some kind is here confessed. They may have no physical cause, but they must have suitable physical occasions and conditions. Accepting the priority of Mary Magdalene as authentic, Renan follows her to the grave and assigns to her the

* 'The Apostles,' p. 45.

glory of accomplishing the resurrection. 'She bore on that day during one hour all the work of the Christian conscience; her witness decided the faith of the future.' When she arrived at the sepulchre the stone was not in its place: 'the vault was open. The body was no longer there.' With surprise and grief she runs to the disciples. Peter and John come as narrated, see the open grave, the linen cloths, and the head-napkin, and return overwhelmed with grief.

Up to this point we are not introduced to anything visionary. The changed position of the stone, and the emptiness of the grave are physical realities, without which the subsequent mental processes could not be started. The reader will therefore bear in mind that these vulgar materialistic features of the history will require elucidation. Beholding the strange spectacle thus presented, Mary lingers. 'Suddenly she hears a light rustling behind her. There is a man standing. At first she thinks it is the gardener,' and of him she makes inquiry for the body. 'For the only answer, she hears herself called by her name, "Mary!" It was the voice that had so often thrilled her before. It was the accent of Jesus. "O my Master!" she cries. She is about to touch Him. . . . The light vision draws back, and says to her, "Touch me not." Little by little the shadow disappears. But the miracle of love is accomplished. That which Cephas could not do, Mary has done; she has been able to draw life, sweet and penetrating words, from the empty tomb. . . . The resurrection has its first direct witness.' All the subsequent visions are represented as the development of this germ of faith in a phantom of Mary's brain.

'The glory of the resurrection belongs, then, to Mary Magdalene. After Jesus, it is Mary who has done most for the foundation of Christianity. The shadow created by the delicate sensibility of Magdalene hovers still over the world. Queen and patroness of idealists, Magdalene knew better than anyone how to affirm her dream, and impose on everyone the holy vision of her passionate soul. Her great womanly affirmation, "He has arisen," has been the basis of the faith of humanity.'

Shall we now proceed to criticize this piece of work? Shall we ask how the grave became empty, and how the cloths were folded so as to make room for this bright, sunny morning madness? This is the keystone of the visionary arch which bridges the chasm between the historic death of Jesus and the equally historic faith in His risen life which speedily spread over Asia and Europe. No one could suggest a more plausible beginning for a series of visions than this, or a more likely person to start them than Mary. But will it bear examination? Renan thinks not, for he immediately deprecates criticism by bursting into a sort of hysterical denunciation of what he certainly has much cause to dread. 'Away, impotent reason!' he exclaims. 'Apply no cold analysis to this *chef-d'œuvre* of idealism and of love. If wisdom refuses to console this poor human race, betrayed by fate, let folly attempt the enterprise. Where is the sage who has given to the world so much joy as the possessed Mary Magdalene?' It is thought in some quarters that Christian faith is accustomed to cry 'away' to 'reason' and to deprecate 'cold analysis,' but here we see that 'Rational Criti-

cism' has its realm of faith, and is not ashamed to supplicate for such forbearance as it does not always grant.

Postponing our scrutiny of this '*chef-d'œuvre* of idealism,' we may pass on to the evening when two disciples set out on their journey to Emmaus. In spite of the significant physical fact of an open grave, and of all that the woman had said, Cleopas and his companion were 'full of sadness.' On the road an unknown companion joined them. This mysterious being was brought by fate upon the scene most opportunely, for he knew how to quote the Scriptures, and suggest hopes of Christ's revival to his disconsolate companions. During the meal at Emmaus we are told that the two disciples gave way to a sort of 'pleasurable sadness.' Forgetting the stranger, who had become their guest, they seem to see Jesus 'holding the bread, and then breaking it and offering it to them.' During their reverie—a reverie in which both were sunk as with one mind—the stranger, either too kind to disturb their delicious dream, or too offended at their absent-mindedness to say 'Farewell,' slipped out unnoticed, to continue his journey, and so, on waking up, they agree that it must have been Jesus!

Returning to Jerusalem, these delighted visionaries learned that Jesus had also shown Himself to Peter; and then came the crowning wonder. 'At these decisive periods of time,' writes Renan, 'a current of air, a creaking window, or a chance murmur, are sufficient to fix the belief of people for ages.' 'During a moment of silence a slight breath passed over the face of the assembly.' This was enough. Some declared

they heard a voice saying 'Peace.' The rest soon fancied the same, and all agreed that Jesus must be present. Some said they saw marks of the nails and the spear. 'Such were the incidents of the day which has decided the lot of the human race. The opinion that Jesus had arisen was thus irrevocably propounded. The sect that was thought to have been extinguished by the death of the Master, was, from henceforth, assured of a wondrous future.' How Thomas was satisfied we are not told, but are assured that a week later he was convinced. Then we are led with much poetic description to Galilee, where the disciples were haunted by renewed visions. Peter one day thought that he heard Jesus ask him thrice, 'Lovest thou Me?' and he 'imagined that he replied, Oh, yea, Lord!' and that twice the apparition said 'Feed My sheep.' This dream he told to John. 'One day, when following their spiritual chiefs, the large band of faithful Galileans' climbed a familiar mountain, and the whole assembly (500 Paul says) 'imagined that they saw the Divine spectre displayed in the clouds,' and all worshipped. Renan, who has been there, declares that these Galilean mountains inspire 'the idea of the immensity of the world and the desire of conquering it.' Thus the disciples on this occasion were so elated with mountain air, that they thought Jesus inspired them to go and overcome all nations in His name. This was the great commission! While these apparitions were frequent, the disciples said Jesus tarried on the earth; as they became rare, they began to say, 'He is ascended into heaven,' and this idea induced at length a vision, or a legend of a vision, of the ascension from the Mount of

Olives. Shortly afterwards a thunder-storm arose, and was mistaken by the disciples for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Such is Renan's much lauded synthesis of the origin of Christianity. It is indeed a '*chef d'œuvre* of idealism.' If Christian faith had been based on such romantic inventions as these of the 'fifth gospel,' how eagerly would the critical eagles have gathered together, and what a feast they would have found!

The first question demanding our attention is this: How are the physical facts which underlie this visionary structure to be accounted for? The grave was opened and the body was gone before Mary's imagination was inflamed. How came these things to pass? Renan, having filled the air with spiritual pageantry, naively remarks: 'Scarcely have we thought, heretofore, to propose a trifling question, but one which admits not of easy solution. Whilst Jesus rose again in this real manner, that is to say, in the hearts of those who loved Him; while the immovable conviction of the Apostles was being formed and the faith of the world being prepared—in what place did the worms consume the lifeless corpse which, on the Saturday evening, had been deposited in the sepulchre?' (p. 66). He mentions several hypotheses, but only to dismiss them as incredible; and, finally, sees in the linen cloths, and in the napkin carefully folded in a corner, the marks of a woman's fingers, and so ascribes the disposal of the body to Mary Magdalene. His touching picture of Mary Magdalene musing in sorrow by the empty grave seems to have been already forgotten, when this afterthought arose. When Renan wrote that pathetic

passage he could not possibly have been thinking that Mary had first of all stolen the body and folded the clothes with artful tact. A body-snatcher would be the last of all persons to have a vision, unless of a terrifying and remorseful character. Nevertheless, to this supposition Renan is driven, at length, as the least improbable which his fertile brain can invent. He reminds us that Mary had been, according to the parlance of the age, 'possessed with seven devils.' 'The female conscience,' he observes, 'when under the influence of passionate love, is capable of the most extravagant illusions. Often it is the abettor of its own dreams. Let us,' he pleads, 'draw a veil over these mysteries,' and then beclouds the theme by a number of observations to the effect that all the most 'splendid marvels' and all 'great faiths' are the blossoming of some 'little deceit.' Thus Mary, whom, as a foundress of the modern world, he ranks next to Jesus, is praised like her Master for greatly daring to impose upon mankind.

Poor Mary! If this admirer's sullying praise were true, her last state was indeed worse than the first. The 'seven devils,' which were once cast out, must have brought back seven times seven companions worse than themselves, before she could think of showing love to Jesus by giving His body to the worms in some secret spot, while her sisters were coming with costly spices for its embalmment, and by then feigning to have seen Him alive, and firing the imaginations of the disciples with her fraud.

The demands made upon our credulity, thus far, are enough to stagger all who retain some respect for

reason and morality; but our 'cold analysis' is not finished. We want to know, not only how these visionary appearances began, but why they were so few, and how they so speedily and suddenly ceased. Renan suggests that they lasted about a year, and places the return of the disciples to Jerusalem as 'perhaps' at the next Passover. The vision of the ascension, and the thunderstorm on the day of Pentecost, he assigns also to the year after Christ's death. He has not a syllable of history, or even a legend, to give colour to this supposition. It seems wildly improbable that these men could have gone on fishing and partaking the common village life of Galilee without making any stir or sign for twelve months, and that then they should break out into enthusiasm and forsake all to preach Christ. Such a 'perhaps' is opposed to all we know of human nature, and it is inconceivable that so tardy a crusade should have stirred up such a commotion in Jerusalem as the first preaching undoubtedly produced. In any case, the fact to be accounted for is, that we have no legend of any appearance of Christ to His disciples, or to any one of them, after the fortieth day, and are only told of ten appearances in all. When imaginations are busy, and excited brains are seeing apparitions, such tales multiply, as Renan truly observes. Why, then, were they so sparse in this alleged epidemic? How remarkable, too, is the fact that only three of these appearances were witnessed by individuals when alone! Mary's brain created the fiction of one interview with Jesus, yet she never imagined or pretended to have a second. Peter saw his Master only once by Himself. John, whose

loving and fervent nature should have produced effects second only to Mary's, had no such dream. The only other intimate friend of Christ's for whom the contagion wrought so personal a favour was the stern ascetic James—one of those brothers of Jesus who, previous to His death, had not believed in Him, but who seems to have been converted by what he saw, inasmuch as he became a chief 'pillar' of the primitive Church. Thirty years later, John had visions in Patmos, but these were distinctly described as such. Stephen also, in the Sanhedrin, had a vision of Jesus in the opened heavens; and Saul of Tarsus states that he saw Jesus in his journey to Damascus. But this exhausts the 'legends.' In spite of this sparsity of appearances and their rapid cessation, the disciples went on preaching and teaching, and enduring persecution with unabated ardour, moderation of conduct, meekness and purity of spirit, and with a commanding influence over the most varied orders of men. Still more remarkable for enthusiastic dreamers, these men always professed to be living in intimate fellowship with Him whom they had seen before, and hoped to see in heaven, but whom they never expected to see again on earth, by day or night, until they died. Such facts as these are absolutely incompatible with the mental conditions postulated by the visionary theory.

The case of the Apostle Paul now requires attention. It might fairly be claimed that if the visionary theory fails to account for the earlier appearances of Christ, it is superfluous to discuss the last. The place occupied by Paul, however, is so unique, and the events associated with his conversion are so fully related, that

they deserve a separate examination. If, in some respects, this should involve a retracing of ground already covered, it will have the advantage of bringing the principles involved into bolder prominence.

The main facts of Paul's life are not in dispute. It is known that at the time of his appearance on the scene, the rulers of the Jews in Jerusalem were, owing to peculiar political circumstances, possessed of ecclesiastical authority over their countrymen in Syria. It is admitted that Paul actually started from the capital armed with power to persecute Christians in Damascus: that he entered that city a blinded man, all his enmity to Christ extinguished; and that instead of carrying out his commission, he became a preacher of the faith he had laboured to destroy. Trivial differences exist in the two accounts of this incident preserved in the Acts of the Apostles, but they relate to matters of no moment, and are not supposed by the most hostile criticism to cast doubt on the general facts related. Those who believe in verbal infallibility are somewhat exercised to weld these minute details into one harmonious and inclusive story; but it suffices for our purposes to observe that, according to both accounts, Paul alone saw Jesus, and only he heard the words which smote him to repentance. The sole question to be decided is, Was there a really objective appearance of Christ to Paul, or can the known facts of the case be accounted for on natural grounds?

Renan, whose explanations of the earlier phenomena have been reviewed, displays an equal amount of boldness and ingenuity in reconstructing the Pauline history. At the outset, he pictures Saul as full of remorse when

drawing near to Damascus. After many years of reflection, Paul declared that he had been actuated by a sense of duty in all his anti-Christian activities; but Renan says it was not so, and we are left to decide which of these two witnesses is the more credible. He pictures him as liking those 'excellent sectarians,' the Nazarenes, rather than breathing out threatenings and slaughter, and as already being haunted by the 'sweet face' of their Master. As he drew near the city, he could not bear to go on. While in this state of mind, material nature, ever kind to Christianity in those primitive days, lent the aid of a thunderstorm. The thunder smote the excited mind of Saul as the voice of Jesus; a flash of lightning blinded him; a delirious fever resulting from sunstroke seized him. All this produced, as well it might, a high degree of cerebral excitement; and so the result of these combined circumstances was that Saul held an imaginary talk with Jesus, became a converted man, and was impressed with the idea that he was to convert many nations! Surely a very beautiful and sublime notion to be produced even by such a rich variety of causations; but the most singular part of the story is that Paul's delirious imagination proved prophetic of events which have changed the current of the world's history!

But even here, coincidences did not cease. Paul was a prey to blindness and delirium in the city to which he was led, and so neither ate nor drank. 'It is easy to imagine what passed,' says Renan, 'during this crisis in that burning brain, maddened by violent disease.' The only thing he names, however, is that this maddened being heard of a disciple called Ananias,

and became convinced that at a touch from him he would recover. Ananias, being told of this, came, and saluting the enemy of his faith as 'brother Saul,' laid his hand upon his head, and from that hour peace returned to Paul's troubled soul. 'He believed himself cured; and as his ailment had been purely nervous, he was so.' Prodigious! Here is a man smitten with delirious fever by sunstroke, and with eyes 'highly inflamed' and utterly blinded by a flash of lightning; yet his ailment was only 'nervous,' and at a touch of kind hands he was made well! Who that believes this will doubt the miracles of Christ?

To this abysmal depth of irrationalism we are asked to descend in order to reach the miserable conviction that this world is 'betrayed by fate,' and that Wisdom has refused to console our sorrowful race. We are asked to believe not only that this story, worthy of the 'Arabian Nights,' is true, but to accept all the consequences. Europe and America owe their religion to this occurrence! Those profound discussions of human nature and divine government which enrich Paul's works are the fruit of sunstroke acting on a remorseful mind! That hymn of love which has not only charmed but purified the affections of many nations was the outcome of a heart which was cleansed and glorified into an altar of living sacrifice by delirious dreams! Those writings which have been the admiration of myriads, and which, next to the words of Christ, are still the most potent forces in the formation of character and opinion—all these things are traceable to a thunderstorm terrifying and striking with disease a man who was persecuting a few excellent enthusiasts! If any

man seriously believes this, I know not what to say, except that surely he also must have been smitten by the sun!

By abjuring all attempts to reconstruct the history in accordance with their hypothesis, many advocates of the visionary theory think to escape the follies which the French Academician so gallantly labours to conceal under the gold-leaf of a brilliant style. So abstaining, they may justly plead that no single failure, or series of failures, can be held to prove the absolute impossibility of the task which they eschew. But while we refrain from fastening the more absurd details of Renan's romance on those who decline to be bound by his inventions, it must none the less be insisted that the chief difficulties which he vainly strove to surmount are, from their very nature, insurmountable, and that no ingenuity, however great, will ever be able to reconcile the language and conduct of Paul with anything less than such an objective appearance of Christ as the Christian Church has always believed in as an historic fact.

One very remarkable expression has been much dwelt upon as giving Paul's own sanction to a subjective interpretation of his vision. In one of his letters he writes: 'It was the good pleasure of God . . . to reveal His Son in me' (Gal. i. 15, 16), and the context shows beyond doubt that the phrase refers to the time of his conversion. Strauss fastened on these words 'in me' as a proof that the Apostle deemed the whole transaction an inward one. Renan discredits the interpretation, and renders the words ἐν ἐμοί, 'for me,' instead of 'in me;' but this suggestion cannot be main-

tained against those who insist on the literal translation. The visionary theory, however, is not helped by this admission, unless it can be shown that Paul spoke of a subjective revelation to the exclusion of one which was objective, or that he regarded the one as independent of the other.

No Christian of any school would dispute the fact that Paul believed in an inward and spiritual revelation of Christ, or that, to his mind, this was of infinitely greater importance than any external sight. The light which dimmed the brightness of the noon-day sunshine was not worthy to be compared with that which irradiated his heart when God shined into it, 'to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ' (2 Cor. iv. 6). Paul had no desire to discern his Lord again in a material form on earth. He was ready to affirm, 'though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him so no more' (2 Cor. v. 16), and was content with the spiritual intercourse of prayer and worship, until in a glorified body he might attain a new vision and know even as he was known. But none of these things preclude the reality, or lower the value of that sight which astonished and blinded him as he walked. The much quoted words which renounce the wish for physical perceptions of Christ contain a distinct assertion that he had once known Him after the flesh, and the revelation of Christ 'in' Paul, being assigned to the date of his fleshly interview, emphatically accords with the belief that the natural was in some way a prelude to, or a medium of, the spiritual. The mere spectacle of Jesus in a bodily form could not flame into Paul's heart a true knowledge

of His nature and mind. In answer to Peter's confession, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God,' Christ replied, 'Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven' (Matt. xvi. 17). Yet Peter received not that spiritual revelation apart from or in independence of the visible 'Man, Christ Jesus,' with whom he walked and talked, and on whose gracious face he gazed while making his memorable confession. The subjective revelation was in this case inseparably connected with the objective, nor can we imagine how it could have been otherwise conveyed. The inward illumination was a discovery of things pertaining to Christ which lay behind the veil of 'flesh and blood,' but the essential nature of the discovery was, that behind that veil there truly dwelt such an exalted Being as Peter's words describe. The spiritual revelation was thus entirely concerned about the objective personality of Christ; and Paul's language about his own experience answers precisely to this case. The Son who was revealed 'in' him was evidently in Paul's judgment the Son who appeared to him by the way, and the Son whom he straightway began to preach, not as an ideal of his own, but as a crucified, buried, and risen Being, who still lived, not merely in spirit, but in a 'glorious body' in heaven.

Another passage on which great stress is laid as favouring a subjective interpretation of Paul's vision, is that in which he speaks of various 'visions and revelations of the Lord' (2 Cor. xii. 1). It cannot be affirmed that these were all objective appearances of Christ, and the general opinion is that some of them were not.

'Why, then,' it is asked, 'should we single out the earliest revelation as if it differed in nature from all the rest? Why should we not, at any rate, allow its character to remain an open question on which differences of opinion are to be tolerated?'

The only way of replying to this appeal is to examine Paul's utterances and see whether he leaves room for any reasonable doubt. Concerning some of these 'visions and revelations' we have no means of arriving at any certain conclusion. Where the Apostle has only made casual references, and omitted to define his own convictions, it would be presumptuous for his readers to dogmatise respecting the precise nature of the occurrences; nor can we profess to be wiser than he, when, as is the case sometimes, he has left on record his own ignorance and uncertainty. All that I care to contend for is that he expresses no doubt of his own, and that he does not leave room for the visionary hypothesis in his narratives of what occurred at his conversion.

The most important vision of which he has given a clear account is that described in 2 Cor. xii. This, therefore, is the one which best admits of comparison with the incidents of his conversion. Of this vision Paul, writing fourteen years afterwards, speaks with much reticence, with a singular sobriety of spirit, and in carefully measured terms. He affirms that in some way he was 'caught up into Paradise,' but whether 'in the body or apart from the body,' he knew not, and that he there saw and heard things which he was not allowed to relate. He then states that a thorn in the flesh was given him that he 'should not be exalted overmuch.'

Setting these statements side by side with the accounts of what took place on the road to Damascus, it will be found that the two narratives abound in striking contrasts. The earlier vision was not in 'paradise,' but on earth. It occurred on a piece of common road travelled by thousands of Paul's hearers and readers. There was no uncertainty about his condition at the time. He was not 'in Christ,' but was assuredly 'in the body,' and was surrounded by a number of anti-Christian companions, who were amazed by the light which arrested their leader. The words of the Person who talked with Paul are distinctly given, and His name is mentioned in a way which precludes a mystical interpretation. He speaks of Himself not as 'the Christ,' or 'the Lord,' or the 'Son of God,' but as 'Jesus'; and as if to lend a further touch of mundane realism, the place of human residence is added, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest' (Acts xxii. 8).

These differences are so broad and obvious, that it is a matter for surprise that any student of Paul's writings could overlook them. They show that if we distinguish between the two events, it is not in an arbitrary spirit, but because the Apostle leaves no option. His vague and even dubious language about the vision in paradise permits uncertainty concerning its character (although even that was manifestly something more than a subjective vision in his own opinion); but the clear, explicit, and material details of the earthly appearance compel us to acknowledge that Paul describes what he regarded as an event as truly historical as the death of Stephen, and his own persecution of the Church.

Unanswerable as the argument thus far appears, it may be supported by other proofs which alone would be sufficient. If we pass from the descriptions of these events to the use made of them, it will become evident that Paul singled out the first revelation of Jesus of Nazareth, and consistently discriminated between it and every subsequent experience. In the course of his public ministry he was frequently impeded by men who denied his apostleship, because, unlike the eleven, he had not shared the companionship of Christ. It is probable that many men of small spiritual discernment, but who had beheld Jesus in the days of His flesh, went about the world boasting of this privilege as if it rendered them superior to Paul. But Paul's rejoinder to his questioners was one which would have been both absurd and fraudulent unless his own sight of Christ had been of the same nature as that of which these men prated, and which the earlier Apostles enjoyed. 'Am I not an Apostle?' he exclaims. 'Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?' (1 Cor. ix. 1). To suppose that when the Apostle wrote this challenge he was only referring to such a spiritual vision of Christ as he shared with all Christians in the world, is to impute to him a depth of duplicity or a height of folly which no reader of his works would ever credit. It is also to be remarked that here also the earthly name 'Jesus' is used.

In the same letter he recited his gospel; viz., 'That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried; and that He hath been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures; and that He appeared to Cephas; then to the twelve; then He

appeared to above five hundred brethren at once; . . . then He appeared to James; then to all the Apostles; and last of all, as to one born out of due time, He appeared to me also' (1 Cor. xv. 3-8). It will be observed that these several appearances are adduced not as disclosures of spiritual truth, but as evidences of historic fact. The persons named are cited as witnesses of objective realities without which the faith of the Corinthians would be vain. A merely 'subjective resurrection' could scarcely have been assigned, and thereby restricted as a single occurrence, to 'the third day;' nor could Paul have remarked concerning it 'last of all . . . . He appeared to me also.' These words 'last of all' demonstrate that Paul esteemed the incident on the road to Damascus the close of a limited number of interviews between the risen Christ and a few selected witnesses, of whom he claimed to be one. Such a phrase never could have been used respecting an inward and spiritual illumination like that which Paul believed all his converts had received, and which may be equally the privilege of men to-day or a thousand years hence.

Even here the proof is not exhausted. In this same chapter Paul founds upon the resurrection of Christ a doctrine of resurrection for all believers. Not, be it observed, as some theories would imply, a doctrine of Christ's resurrection in the renewed lives of His disciples, but the revival of those who, having died, have been buried like seeds in the dust of the earth, but are one day to be awakened and meet Christ in His manifested glory. The argument which Paul elaborated was not to show the possibility of a mystical renewal of the

perfect life of Christ in Corinthian worshippers, but to show the mystery of that change whereby the seed which is sowed in weakness and corruption is to be raised in power and incorruption. His view was that imitators of Christ's self-sacrificing life are of all men most miserable if there be no future career for those who suffer for righteousness' sake on earth. He contends that apart from the bodily resurrection of Christ men have no hope of such a sequel; and he stakes his own character, and the characters of all his fellow Apostles, on the truth of their united testimony to that historic fact. 'If Christ is preached that He hath been raised from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither hath Christ been raised: and if Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we witnessed of God that He raised up Christ; whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead are not raised' (1 Cor. xv. 12-15).

In the face of such language it is idle to suppose that genius will ever be able to reconcile Paul's words and conduct with a 'subjective' theory of his own vision of Christ.

The only remaining theory of the Resurrection is that which accepts the statements of the New Testament in their natural historical sense; viz., that Jesus, who lived, died, and was buried, rose up from the grave, and was thus declared to be the Son of God with power.

If the phenomena occurred in the ordinary course

of nature, it must be possible to suggest some explanation of them which shall at least be conceivably true. In the absence of any such explanation, and in full view of the conspicuous failure of all the attempts which have been made to provide one, the Christian inference is entitled to claim our acceptance. All the possibilities, probabilities, desirabilities, and moral necessities which have been considered in previous chapters converge to sustain this inference as reasonable, and to secure respect for the direct testimony which, taken alone, establishes the phenomena beyond dispute.

Glancing back over the long series of objections to the Christian faith which have been encountered, it will be noticed that they are broadly divisible into two main classes, philosophical and critical, and that the writers who urge them may be separated with tolerable distinctness into two corresponding groups. When this partition is observed, a very remarkable and economical division of labour becomes apparent. Philosophers devolve the examination of Christian testimony upon critical experts, and critics leave the more arduous task of elaborating abstract arguments to philosophers. Thus, neither party accepts the responsibility of establishing a complete case against Christianity. It would be idle to complain of this natural and perhaps inevitable arrangement, but it is highly important that we should guard against some fallacious impressions which it may easily produce. In the olden time a certain city was assaulted at the same hour by two armies, one operating on the western and the other on the eastern side. Neither army was able to effect an en-

trance, but each summoned the city to surrender on the ground that further resistance was useless, because the assault on the other side had been successful. Something similar to this has taken place in modern controversy. The idea of collusion between two great branches of literature is preposterous, and therefore no one will suspect either philosophy or criticism of an unprincipled *ruse de guerre*. Controversial allies are not likely to be very severe judges of each other's performances, and may be excused from moral blame if they award to those friends a victory which exists only in their own sanguine estimation. But however accounted for, the facts are obvious. Philosophy confesses that on abstract grounds the Christian revelation is not incredible, and that its claims can only be decided by evidence; yet it calls upon us to renounce faith because criticism is said to have proved the evidences insufficient. Criticism breaks down in its repeated endeavours to destroy the Christian testimony, yet still summons us to relinquish faith, because philosophy has proved the things which it affirms to be natural impossibilities.*

Before commencing this chapter, the chief hindrances raised by philosophy and criticism had been examined, and for all who assented to the conclusions reached, the resurrection of Christ, instead of appearing an improbability, was already so probable that it was almost a necessity of thought. We have now found that the outward phenomena of Christ's life, death, and resur-

* The justice of these statements may be seen by comparing certain representative quotations, which will be found on pp. 156, 157, and 181—183.

rection are beyond dispute. We have also seen that, even when viewed by themselves, they can neither be accounted for by illusion, nor by fraud, nor by the two combined, even though supplemented by a surprising series of accidental coincidences such as Renan so liberally invents. But these facts are not alone. They stand related to those phenomena of Hebrew literature which by themselves require us to regard the Bible as a God-provided book. They are the centre of a prolonged course of history stretching from Abraham to our own day, and spreading over an ever-widening space, as the ancient oracle announced. A life thus heralded and followed stands alone in the midst of the ages, and is incomparable with any other that can be named. Around the grave of Christ so many marvels cluster, that if He did not rise from the dead, the facts which then call for explanation are quite as miraculous as His asserted resurrection, and, because deprived of their only moral significance, they are immeasurably more difficult to believe.

I submit, therefore, that the only two alternatives now open to our choice are either to dismiss the whole matter from our minds as a mystery upon which we decline to bestow any further attention; or to accept the resurrection as a fact of history, and with it Christ's superhuman claims, and the Bible of which He is the central theme as a God-provided book, and its teachings and counsels as the guide of life.

With respect to the first of these alternatives I shall say but little. Every man must consider for himself what is the true line of wisdom and duty, and I presume not in this place to use any urgency. We should

not, however, conceal from ourselves the fact that to turn away our thoughts from Christ involves a judgment that His claims are unworthy of respect. The Gospel, which offers certain blessings in His name, places Christ before each hearer as truly as He was placed before Pilate, and no hand-washing can relieve from responsibility those who find no fault in Him, yet leave Him to the scorn and rejection of the world.

But whatever may be done by individuals, mankind at large will not cease to think of Christ. By a resistless fascination He attracts the intensest interest wherever He is preached, and, as a rule, neither those who believe nor those who disbelieve can 'let Him alone.' The future prospects of our race in this world and of individual lives beyond the grave are so bound up with the falsity or verity of His continued existence and reign, that some elucidation of the facts is everywhere demanded. The scheme of moral government of which He is the centre, and of which the Bible is the exponent, is the only one which harmonizes the terrible facts of pain and moral evil with man's spiritual aspirations, and with the goodness of the Creator. If Christ be unworthy of man's faith, the hopes by which the noblest leaders of humanity in ancient times were inspired were vain. If Christ fails us, then Abraham's faith was false, and his expectation of a conquering seed, which survived through numberless generations, was a baseless figment, and its marvellous accomplishment in history must be due to a combination of Fraud and Fate in league together to deceive and tantalize mankind by illusions so beautiful that they are only

not Divine because not true. In this case the millions who have been purified from wicked ways and thoughts have been washed in a fountain of lying legends; the sacrifices whereby nations have been redeemed from barbarism and debasing superstitions, and those martyrdoms by which the mind has been emancipated from despotic bonds, have been inspired by belief in a vast imposture; the happy lives of quiet ministry and patient endurance which teem behind the more obtrusive show of worldly activities in Christian lands are sustained by sanctifying and ennobling fictions; and the countless hosts who have died in the hope of 'an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away' have been like men dying in a desert with a deceitful mirage glowing before their eyes. If Christ be renounced, then all faith that God has given oracles to men is absurd; the entire scheme of redemption which fills the Scriptures dies like a dream; man's fall from innocency remains a miserable fact, and his return to the dust is still inevitable, but the thought of rising again to sit on thrones of victory ceases to be a tenable imagination. If all this be lost, God's silence then denies His goodness. Without evidence of goodness, His power must loom before our thought as a dreadful attribute displayed in calamities, disease, and death, rather than in words and acts of mercy. Without goodness, His wisdom sinks down to a mere mechanician's skill, and, lacking moral quality, affords no theme for praise. From such a silent and indifferent God the world might excusably turn away; and man's best hope would be the heaven of Pessimism, where the wicked cease from troubling

even to repent, and where the righteous are at rest from their unsatisfied desire.

With such tremendous issues depending on the truth or falsity of the Christian faith, the world will not dismiss the claims of Christ from its attention. But I am well aware that when the mind is driven by its own operations into an apparently final dilemma, it does not always choose the more reasonable opinion and cordially embrace it. Still less do we feel disposed to adopt a conclusion to which the reasonings of another mind would conduct us. Where no contrary prejudice is at work, and even where the wishes are distinctly favourable, the very forms of logic seem to arouse opposition or to awaken distrust. If, therefore, the argument, up to this point, has been approved, and if the reader has felt the dilemma now before us to be the real and ultimate issue of religious thought, it by no means follows that he will either cease to think about Christ, which is almost an impossibility, or that he will believe in Christ's superhuman claims and His resurrection from the dead.

Against this belief there lies in thousands of minds to-day a heavy weight of intellectual habit. The theories and criticisms of unbelief may be disposed of as inconclusive and unsound, but the feeling of suspicion may remain. Deeper than all contrary creeds, there is the fear of believing what is supersensuous, and a distrust of any conclusion on which many intellectual leaders look down as the marks of defective education in science and philosophy, or as the indications of a naturally feeble and credulous mind.

Such prepossessions as these are not the only oppositions which the Christian faith has to encounter. The Christian hope appeals to the purest and sublimest yearnings of human nature, but it calls for the mortification of many cravings which are immensely strong. It summons men to direct their energies towards a remote and invisible goal, and thus involves a moderation of zeal in the pursuit of those earthly objects which excite the passions, and sometimes requires their entire relinquishment. The call of Christ is to a throne of glory, but the glory is one not easily obtained. It is a glory of victory over the temptations which assail men through the senses, and over many prevalent fashions of thought, taste, and practice by which those around are dominated. The rewards of Christ, though described in figurative language, are essentially moral and spiritual, and are such as do not appeal to our hearts except in hours of moral wakefulness, and in times when the glamour with which earthly things are invested by love, or ambition, or inferior appetites, has been dissipated by a stern experience. The recognition of Christ's claims is, therefore, mixed up with many conflictive thoughts and inclinations, and generally implies some readiness to deny self, and to follow in the footsteps of One who was always compassionate towards man's infirmities, and very merciful to his unrighteousness, yet who asks great things of His disciples, and leads them not seldom to a cross.

Such hindrances to faith as are thus imperfectly suggested can never be removed by purely intellectual methods. No force of reasoning can coerce those spiritual conditions in which Christ is discerned as

the true Lord and Leader of the soul, without whose guidance life is a journey which closes with a grave in the wilderness. My aim has been to show that the severest processes of thought conduct the man of culture to the same standpoint for the contemplation of Christ's spiritual claims as is occupied by the untutored peasant or the simple child, and leave him free to yield up his nature to the influences of Christ. If to any it should seem that this is a poor termination to so prolonged a process, that opinion should be reconsidered. A religion which comes forth from God, and is designed to deal with all men equally, must be one which places the wise and the unwise on the same level, and puts both classes to the same spiritual proof. If the wise man has to travel over a hard and dangerous road before he can stand in his maturity where he stood in childhood, it is only because the mind, once started on a course of independent thinking, can only return with conscious honesty to bow before the Eternal Teacher when it has sincerely found that this is its true wisdom, and that elsewhere there exists no place of mental rest. If the intellectual journey be thus terminated, the thinker will not complain of his toil nor regret the sufferings he has endured, neither will he murmur because it brings him side by side with those who have never felt the need of such far travels, but have trusted to the seeing of their hearts. The door which opens into a Father's house should be one through which the least and lowliest can pass; and if high thinking were to bring men to a secret entrance, hidden from the masses of mankind, it would reflect upon the wisdom and goodness of Him whose special

care should be bestowed upon those who most require His aid. If Christ had thanked God that the secret of the kingdom had been hidden from babes and sucklings, but revealed to the wise and prudent, it would have been a terrible impeachment of the Father. If God be man's Father, a childlike spirit should be the sole condition of His favour and blessing. All that philosophy and criticism can do in the production of this spirit is to undo what they may have done towards its destruction, and to leave the soul, untrammelled by intellectual suspicions, to rejoice in any light that may shine into it from a spiritual source. If Christ is to be received into the heart, He must approve Himself as worthy to be crowned the King of kings and Lord of lords. Logic can only be the handmaid of our higher faculties of insight, by showing that we are justified in believing that the Scriptures give a true account of what He was, and said, and did; and that we do no violence to reason, and contradict no verified knowledge, when, standing in this conquered space, we say with the fisherman of Galilee, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.'

## CHAPTER X.

### THE LIFE OF FAITH.

It is now proclaimed to the world that He who died and rose again, and was seen a few times by chosen witnesses, still lives in a glorified state, though no more seen by mortal eyes. We are invited to believe that His interest in the world has not diminished, and that, apart from accidents of form and place, He is 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' We are offered no physical evidence of His presence, but are assured that He is as truly acquainted with our inmost needs and thoughts, and as truly accessible to poor and contrite souls, as when He sat by the seashore, or crossed the flowery hills of Galilee, or stood in the courts of the temple in Jerusalem. We are urged to put our lives under His direction; to accept His recorded life as our example; His words as our counsel; His death as the inviolable pledge of God's eternal love, and the declaration of His righteousness in the passing by of sin; and His resurrection as the sign of the Divine will to confer on all who are united to Him by inward loyalty and trust 'an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.' 'We walk by faith, not by sight,' wrote Paul; and all men everywhere are counselled to be his followers in this, and to

view life as a pilgrimage towards an unseen country where Christ reigns, and where His servants shall see His face and do Him service evermore.

It has often been supposed that faith is demanded in Scripture in an arbitrary manner, and that there is no natural or necessary reason why it should play so important a part in the Christian religion. Reflection will show, however, that without faith no intercourse with another spiritual Being is possible, and no wise direction of the energies is conceivable. Without a measure of faith it is impossible to maintain intercourse even with our fellow men. Without faith, business is arrested, commerce perishes, friendship ceases, families are dissolved, society collapses, and fear begets a reign of terrible suspicion, wherein every man's hand is against his neighbour, and human life becomes a burden too grievous to be borne. Faith is thus the law of all intelligent and friendly intercourse, and is indispensable in a religion which is to bind nations into one brotherhood before the Great Father. It is not merely because God is unseen that faith is thus essential. It would not cease to be so if the heavenly Potentate were visible as the sun at noonday, or if He were to come down daily to talk with us in the cool evening twilight, as He descended in the sacred idyl of paradise.

But while faith is thus the only conceivable means of fellowship with God, many shrink from its exercise; and I propose now to examine some of the reasons assigned for this reluctance.

One of the most common motives for refusing to allow faith any place in the scheme of life is the fear that, if the

mind once suffers its convictions to overpass the limits of knowledge which can be scientifically verified, no safeguard remains against the admission of all professedly supernatural events. The world has teemed with prodigies alleged to have been wrought by various deities and demi-gods, and by the dead bones or living hands of saints. To-day things which, if actually accomplished, can be nothing less than miraculous, are freely boasted of by the Roman Catholic Church, and by various other sects and communities. Without undergoing the toil of examining all these ancient legends and modern marvels, most people dismiss them as unworthy of attention. Multitudes of Christians, who accept the miracles of the Bible, repudiate others from an almost instinctive feeling that they are less trustworthy, though without presuming or deigning to say on what principle they draw a line of demarcation. But logical minds are scarcely satisfied with this rather facile process of selection. They want some definite reasons to be assigned for so sharp a distinction, and often insist that no such reasons can be found. It is urged that if we accept one group of supernatural events as real, we are bound to admit at least the abstract possibility of all being equally genuine; and then the rather awkward dilemma is pressed home—'Either we must abandon our minds to the inroad of every fabulous invention, or else we must take the pains of investigating such vast masses of evidence as would consume the major part of life, and respecting which we are practically assured beforehand that not a thousandth part, if any at all, would repay our toil.'

In reply to this argument, it must be conceded that

the principles which have been relied upon to prove the possibility of a Divine Revelation do forbid us to deny the philosophic possibility of any alleged miracle being genuine. Whatever may be the real or supposed dangers of such an admission, we have no alternative but to make it. The winking of a Madonna and the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius are no more to be disproved on abstract grounds of physical impossibility than the resurrection of Christ. All three are impossible if there be no God, but to Him who made the heavens and the earth, none of them would present any difficulty, if He saw fit to so exercise His Will. But the perils involved in this admission are far less than is commonly imagined. The 'History of Human Error,' which Mr. Caxton meant to publish, would have shown conclusively that no theoretic scepticism has availed to protect men from the extravagances of superstition. Nothing, indeed, except the possession of infinite wisdom and knowledge, could render man's judgment perfectly secure against deception. But rightly understood and applied, the principles already considered constitute the most effective safeguard which philosophy can furnish. The law of continuity in the method of Divine Government, renders some revelation a moral necessity; but it is equally cogent to convince us that supernatural events will be so rare as not to interfere with faith in the reign of law, *i.e.* in the regularity and order of the universe under the sovereignty of an unchanging God. Such events are necessary for the communication of some knowledge of God and of His Will to men; but whoever believes in the Bible as a book of God's providing,

in the sufficiency of Christ's moral teachings, the wisely measured reticence of His statements concerning unseen realms and future things, the wide-reaching significance of His miracles, the expedience of His going away from sight, together with the rarity of His appearances to a few selected witnesses after the Resurrection —whoever believes in these things will also strongly feel the unlikelihood of any new miraculous revelation, until Christ Himself shall come again.

But we are not left to mere probabilities in this matter. The same principles which commend the Christian revelation as credible, provide a preliminary test which may be applied to all alleged miracles, and it is one which suffices to dismiss almost all, whether ancient or modern, as unworthy of serious consideration. Only for the greatest purposes can we suppose that the Almighty will think it wise or needful to interpose some exceptional act of will within the ordinary course of nature. If, therefore, trivial, uninstructive, or capricious miracles are physically possible, they are morally impossible ; and we may ask, respecting any reported marvel, Is this event associated with a truly great and godlike purpose ? That is a test which may be applied without any expenditure of time or labour. It requires no tedious sifting of evidence. The mind can use it, and will instinctively do so, whenever a tale is heard, or read, and its use will repel the invasion of lying wonders more effectually than any theoretic scepticism. The miracles related in Romanist lives of primitive and mediæval saints, and the modern miracles asserted by priests and nuns, are so puerile, so devoid of moral dignity and aim, so unfitted to add

a single ray of light to our ideas of God, so well-fitted to obscure true faith in Him and to contradict some of the sublimest teachings of Scripture, that no one who apprehends the spirit and doctrine of Christ will be troubled to investigate their evidences. The whole category of so-called spiritualistic phenomena, such as table-turning, spirit-rapping, necromancy, etc., may be thrust aside for similar reasons. They are so unutterably foolish, that if produced by spirits, they must evidently be wrought by the ghosts of deceased lunatics and imbeciles, and as such are unworthy of attention. They are far less marvellous than the best tricks of honest conjurers; and thoughtful persons who believe in the great God declared by Christ, and appreciate the nature of that kingdom which He has established on the earth, will view such phenomena with sorrowful contempt. If students choose to investigate them for scientific purposes, we may cordially wish them a reward for their labours; and if professional magicians search them out in order to devise money-getting entertainments, no one need object. But when one effect of supposed miracles is to bring notoriety and money to certain nunneries and monasteries, or parish priests, or to some strolling person of doubtful antecedents, the more thoroughly we believe in the Christian revelation, the more invulnerable we shall be to all such assaults on our credulity, and the less disposed to regard them as operations of the Spirit of God.

It is important to observe that this test is practically the same as was recommended in ancient times to the Hebrews, and afterwards to the Christian Church. In the Book of Deuteronomy we find intima-

tions of true prophets who were to be sent to the nation in later days, and of one great prophet in particular.* But with these intimations there were also clear warnings that false prophets and workers of deceitful wonders would arise. The people would have great need, therefore, of circumspection, and of some easily handled touchstone which plain persons might apply. If they were to receive as a Divine miracle every performance they lacked ability to explain, they would be at the mercy of each wandering trickster who had learned the arts of oriental magic. Hence Moses, who had looked behind the scenes of Egyptian craft, prepared the people to try the teachers who might court their allegiance. As one test of a professed prophet, he admonished them to watch the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of his prediction (Deut. xviii. 22). But this test alone was insufficient, because in some cases it would be inapplicable, and in others might be positively misleading. Where a prediction related to events not instantly impending, its first hearers might die before the question of fulfilment could be answered; and as the result could only be known after it had transpired, such knowledge would always be obtained too late when the prophet founded immediate advice upon his prediction. It might also happen occasionally that a lucky or shrewd impostor's prediction would come to pass. Therefore a more stringent and immediate test was supplied. If there arose in the midst of them a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and he gave them a

* It makes no difference to the value of the passage as employed in the text whether the authorship of Deuteronomy be assigned to Moses or to some later writer.

sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder came to pass, whereof he spake; yet if the object of the sign were to withdraw from faith in the God of their fathers, or to induce a neglect of the moral law, they were not to hearken to that prophet, but were to regard his sign as a temptation to prove whether their hearts were loyal (Deut. xiii. 1-5). Similarly Christ forewarns that 'false Christs and false prophets' will arise, and show 'great signs and wonders;' but His disciples are bidden to believe them not, because He declares that any new revelation of the true Lord from heaven will be broad and world-wide as the light which shines from the east unto the west (Matt. xxiv. 24-28), and therefore no more to be mistaken than midnight fireworks can be mistaken for the rising sun. At another time He counselled His followers, when estimating the credibility of professed prophets, to attach supreme importance to their personal character and the moral quality of their teachings, saying, 'Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?' (Matt. vii. 15, 16).

Similar passages might be quoted freely, but these suffice. This moral test, when applied in concert with the others named, clears the field of professed miracles in a wholesale manner. The myths of ancient Rome and Greece, and the tales which float about the cradles of several latter-day religions, cannot bear their touch. The legends of the Papacy, when subjected to them, show their spuriousness, as do false diamonds when held in flame. Nothing can be regarded as an act of

Divine volition which would frustrate the will of God in the most important of all respects, or break the order of His moral government. God will not confound our judgments; and if we believe that in Christ He has intervened to promote righteousness and truth, we may stake our destiny on the refusal of any signs, however inexplicable, which would obscure or degrade that truth, or distract our hearts from singleness of service.

Another cause of reluctance to allow faith in a Divine revelation any place in the scheme of life may be found in mistaken ideas of the nature of Christian faith, and of its true relation to knowledge which can be scientifically verified. To multitudes in our day faith is only a synonym for credulity. They look upon a Christian as a man who accepts a number of propositions without a well-founded assurance of their intrinsic truth, and simply because he had been taught in childhood that it was his duty to believe them, and to hold them fast under penalties of future judgment.

It must be confessed that professedly Christian bodies are mainly responsible for this prevalent mistake. The Roman Catholic Church, which claims to be the sole exponent of Christianity, maintains this view of faith. She demands an unquestioning acceptance of her dogmas, not because the private judgment approves them as manifested truth, but because she affirms them. Cardinal Newman answers those who taunt him with believing the incredible doctrine of Transubstantiation by confessing, 'I did not believe the doctrine till I was a Catholic. I had no difficulty in believing it as soon as I believed that the Roman

Catholic Church was the oracle of God.' He also observes, 'From the time that I became a Catholic, of course I have no further history of my religious opinions to narrate.'*

The Church of Rome is not alone in this view of faith. She is alone in the arrogance and consistency with which she enforces it; but some other Churches present their creeds and insist upon their acceptance rather than invite their examination. Hitherto a common rule has been that if people have endorsed these rigid statements of doctrine, they have been treated as Christian believers, although devoid of any zeal for God and righteousness; while, on the other hand, if men have dissented from these formulas, whether as contrary in their judgment to sound reason or to the verified facts of nature and history, or as incorrect versions of the doctrine taught in Scripture, they have been branded as heretics and deprived of ecclesiastical privileges, even though they manifested a staunch and exultant attachment to Christ and what they understood to be His truth. Nothing, indeed, in all Church history is more painfully beautiful than the manner in which countless martyrs have been sustained by faith in God, while denounced as infidels, and while persecuted by those who were unworthy to call them brethren.

It is not surprising that many have derived their conceptions of Christian faith from these notorious facts: but it must be strenuously insisted that the opinions so arrived at are not such as are inculcated in the Scriptures. Turning for information to the Bible,

* J. H. Newman, 'Apologia pro Vitâ Suâ,' pp. 373, 374.

we find no sanction of an imperious dogmatism in any of its books. Christ, indeed, spake 'with authority, and not as the Scribes and Pharisees;' but His 'authority' was the natural tone of One who proclaimed Himself a special messenger from heaven, and not the accent of intellectual despotism. We do not expect a traveller who alone has explored a continent or discovered an island to speak as if we were entitled to balance our notions against his knowledge; nor would it be appropriate for the commissioner of a great monarch to address the people of a remote dependency with bated breath and deferential mien, as if they were on an equality with their ruler. If, therefore, Christ had not spoken with authority, it would have been an evident token that He was not really conscious of having come from God. But it will be observed that if the tone of Christ's speech proved that He Himself was free from that slavish subjection to the yoke of tradition which distinguished the professional teachers of Israel, it no less clearly showed that He had none of their arrogance towards the common people, and earnestly desired to make His hearers free also. The Rabbins were living phonographs mechanically repeating the words of others who had gone before, and their original contributions were seldom more than ingenious illustrations of ancient doctrines or subtle discriminations of legal points. But if they slavishly adhered to the dicta of their respective schools, they gave no greater liberty to their own auditors, and made little or no appeal to the private judgments of their disciples. It may be doubted whether a more dogmatic teaching caste ever existed, or one more abjectly obeyed. But

Christ, in breaking loose from conventional restraints as a teacher, of necessity invited the people to assert their own liberty at least to learn of whom they would. Only by revolting from the domination of their established teachers could they accept the yoke and burden of the new Master; and one chief inducement to make this choice was the singular blending in Christ of meekness and lowliness of heart with that sublime tone of personal authority which, mightier even than the 'accent of conviction,' gave assurance that He knew the things whereof He spoke.

Christ said little about the 'right of private judgment,' but this was because He raised the question into a higher region. He taught not merely that men have a right to use their faculties independently in the pursuit of truth, but that it is their duty so to do, and that they are responsible to God for the due discharge of this most primary obligation. We may even go beyond this statement. He assumed that men are not only called upon to exercise their private judgment as a duty, but that they are unable to avoid doing so, however much they may dislike the task. The refusal to consider what is presented as religious truth is itself a momentous and decisive exercise of the reason; and the relinquishment of private judgment, whether in deference to an order or Church, or to the power of public opinion, is a serious dereliction of duty. Whether the refusal be due to mental indolence, or to the fear of consequences, or to that vague shrinking from responsibility which makes the decision of important questions a thing of dread to so many—however brought about, and however excused, it constitutes an act of

private judgment of the most stupendous sort. There is no more terrible exertion of the living energies than the act of suicide; so there is no more extreme usage of free thought than that which resigns the right to think. In agreement with these principles, Christ called upon men to take heed how they heard His words, and said that by those words they would be judged. By refusing to hear His voice, they took upon themselves the responsibility of treating Him as one who had no claim on their allegiance, no fitness to be the guide and leader of their lives; and by remaining under the tutorship of men who hated Him, they elected to run the risks of refusing one who claimed to be the Prophet for whom their fathers had waited for so many centuries, and concerning whom it had been said of old, 'The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken . . . . And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto My words which He shall speak in My name, I will require it of him' (Deut. xviii. 15, 19).

What Christ demanded of all men everywhere, was therefore distinctly an act of private judgment, and, according to Him, character is most vividly exhibited in the manner in which this demand is met. He called upon men so far to assert their personal responsibility as to sever themselves, if needs be, from father and mother, and wife and children: and when the acknowledgment of Himself as the Messiah was visited with that excommunication which reduced the outcast to the level of a Samaritan dog, He still approved and advised the sacrifice as one which ought to be made.

This mode of appeal to the individual conscience and reason, which prevails in all Christ's public and private teachings, is no less characteristic of the Apostles. When Peter preached the gospel at Pentecost, he pressed for an individual change of mind, and, in one very significant sentence, pointed out that the great danger which beset his hearers was that of being submerged as personal units in the great flood of national prejudice and antagonism to Christ. 'Save yourselves,' cried he, 'from this crooked generation' (Acts ii. 40), *i.e.*, Let each man save himself by separating his personal thought and conduct, and so his personal destiny, from the common mass of Israel.

In all his preaching, Paul pursued the same course. He said, 'Believe,' but always gave reasons why men should believe. In addressing audiences of his own countrymen, he reasoned with them out of those Hebrew Scriptures which they already recognised as Divine, and praised the Bereans as noble, because candid and bold enough to search those ancient documents afresh to see whether the things he affirmed 'were so or not.' When standing before philosophers on Mars' Hill, he did not quote those Scriptures of which they, as foreigners, were ignorant, or which they were at any rate unprepared to regard as authoritative; but he reasoned with them on philosophic grounds, and even quoted their own poets and teachers in confirmation of the truths he preached. Every missionary sermon was an appeal to private judgment, and a summons to each hearer to tear himself away from the creeds and customs of his fathers, if the gospel commended itself to his conscience as true.

Nothing is more obvious in the New Testament than the constancy and boldness with which it thus addresses man as a reasonable being. It probably contains as many cautions against credulity as invitations to believe. It courts inquiry. It deprecates thoughtlessness, neglect, prejudice, pride, bigotry, irrational belief in idols, and indolent subjection to presumptuous teachers or hoary tradition. It tells men to try the spirits of pretended apostles and prophets, and to test all things and cleave only to what is found true and good. Unless, therefore, we are prepared to repudiate the Author and first preachers of Christianity as exponents of its first principles, the Roman view of faith as a submission of the mind to authority must be dismissed as an ecclesiastical invention.

Another view of faith which needs correction is that which regards it as a mere intellectual assent to the truth of certain propositions when sustained by adequate proofs. This is regarded by Rome as essentially the Protestant doctrine, and by many Agnostics is discussed as the only alternative which remains when authority has been cast off. But assent to the truth of demonstrated propositions cannot properly be called faith. It is conviction, but convictions are of different kinds. The right solution of a mathematical problem secures conviction, whenever it is understood, but this is rather the reception of knowledge than the awakening of faith. Faith only comes into play in relation to things beyond sight, and has for its objects things which have not yet been, or things which, by scientific methods, perhaps, 'never can be proved.'

Protestants have often lost sight of this distinction,

and with most disastrous results; but in the Scriptures it is never obscured. Faith is defined as 'the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen,' and the Bible is suffused with this idea from beginning to end. The only faith to which moral value is ascribed, is that personal trust in God which distinguished Abraham, and was 'counted unto him for righteousness.' The biographical sketches which abound in the Old Testament are all so written as to illustrate this principle. When Paul was charged with subverting the ancient religion of Israel by his doctrine of Faith, he was able to quote Genesis to show that it was not new; and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews exhibits the continuity of God's ways throughout all dispensations, by calling over the muster-roll of ancient heroes who, by faith in God, waxed strong and brave, and died in peaceful expectation of things not seen. The laws of Moses presupposed and called into exercise this faith in God. The great burden of psalms and prophecies was 'trust in the Lord.' Those proverbial sayings which express the homelier thoughts of Hebrew sages about life and duty, are steeped in the conviction that faith in God is the beginning of wisdom and the indispensable condition of a happy and righteous course.

But while this trust in God as a Person must not be confounded with a mere intellectual assent to certain affirmations concerning Him, it is no less important to observe that, without some assent, it can have no existence. Endeavours have been made by some of the choicest spirits of our time—and, in England, most notably by the late Professor T. H. Green, of Oxford—to emancipate Faith as a spiritual state from all de-

pendence on historic beliefs. In so far as this may have exhibited the profound difference between the two things, and the infinitely higher value of the one than the other, a great service has been rendered to religion. But two things may be distinguishable in thought, and have exceedingly different qualities and uses in fact, while the lesser may be quite indispensable to the production and existence of the greater. The roots, stem, branches and leaves of a tree are distinguishable from each other, and from the fruit, which is the crown of all; but no man hopes to cultivate grapes except upon a vine. Similarly those spiritual states and those Christ-like deeds which writers of this school esteem so highly, are, according to their own admissions, scarcely to be found at present, except in conjunction with those historic beliefs which they seek to dispense with. Therefore, judging from experience, they can only be expected hereafter to flourish where men feel themselves united to Christ as branches of the 'True Vine,' and have faith in the Living Father as 'the Husbandman.'

The endeavour to retain the warmth and light of spiritual Christianity by those who despair of overcoming the current scientific and philosophic objections to a supernatural revelation, is one which no Christian who understands the conflict of our age can view without intensest sympathy. Its leaders are, for the most part, men who have felt the force of that current which sweeps some towards the Romish Church as a haven of rest from intellectual strife and the sense of personal responsibility, but who have no less been influenced by that opposing stream whereby others are carried into a cold Agnosticism. Though moved in turn by each

of these strong floods, they anticipate with dismay the bourne to which either would conduct. Recognising in the Christian life the highest type of human character, they cherish an intense desire to have Christ living again in themselves, to be imbued with His spirit of holy love, and to do those works which no man can do 'except God be with him.' Hence they inquire, What can hinder us from appropriating all the spiritual benefits of Christianity while ceasing to concern ourselves about its historic evidences?

My reply to this question is that I know of no valid objection to such an appropriation of these spiritual benefits, provided that the historic evidences are not left alone because suspected of unsoundness. If a man be ignorant of the attacks upon these evidences made by so many in our day, but is spiritually convinced of the truth of all he reads in his New Testament, there is no reason why he should be asked to suspend his faith until he has studied Christian apologetics. Or, if a student has learned, through much mental strife, to put more trust in his spiritual discernments than in the results of logical processes or critical research; and if, on the strength of his spiritual discernment of Christ, he is able to dismiss from his mind all doubts respecting the historical form in which the Eternal Life was manifested centuries since in Judea, his position is one which I should not care to disturb. But when it is proposed to treat as immaterial the actual truth or falsity of such central and essential facts as the superhuman works and claims of Christ and His bodily resurrection, I most earnestly deprecate the attempt. The spiritual discernment of

spiritual things may fairly be deemed higher and more trustworthy for religious purposes than any other kind of knowledge. It may justly be allowed to secure our assent to propositions which might otherwise be regarded as inadequately proved; and, as a matter of experience, it no doubt does very often precede, and largely contribute to induce, an intellectual acceptance of the Christian evidences. But these admissions in no degree sanction the supposition that spiritual faith can be rationally entertained in defiance of a previous intellectual dissent, and in conjunction with an admission that science and philosophy have proved the most important statement in the Gospels to be absolutely incredible. It is true, as Hegel said, that 'religion must contain nothing but religion: and as such it contains only eternal spiritual truth.'* But it is also true, as he himself acknowledged, that a certain historical form is necessary. The idea must have the side of reality; and reality implies circumstantial surroundings in space and time.† We may also yield our cordial assent to his plea that we must not be misled by the fact of an historical appearance into elevating the particulars of that history to the rank of spiritual truths. The spiritual cannot be attested by the external.‡ In this contention he laid down a canon by which Christian advocates may judiciously be guided; for it is only a philosophic adaptation of Christ's words to Peter, 'Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee.' But when from this principle Hegel proceeds to draw the inference, that the whole question of

* 'Philosophie der Religion': G. W. F. Hegel (Vol. I., p. 152).
† Ibid., Vol. II., p. 236. ‡ Ibid., Vol. II., p. 160.

miracles need not trouble us, the conclusion must be pronounced unjustifiable. If we are prepared to regard the external as sufficiently attested by the spiritual, we may leave the ordinary evidences of the external unexamined. But if the historical form in which the religion of Christ is presented to us be deemed incredible, the spiritual idea cannot reasonably be received as true. Hence, without contending that faith must be preceded by historical investigations or by arguments to prove a miraculous revelation possible, I submit that whenever the Christian idea is touched by denial or doubt on 'the side of reality,' that denial or that doubt must be removed if spiritual faith is to survive; and this is more certainly necessary if this faith is to have sufficient vital energy and convincing power to propagate itself in other minds.

When men have fled from the noise and tumult of controversial battle-fields, to sit at the feet of Christ and learn of Him the secret of a pure and noble life, it is an unwelcome task to call them back again. But if they have fled from those fields as defeated men, while we are convinced that a victory might be theirs if they returned; if we are assured that such a flight from conflict, by men whose services are sorely needed, makes the battle harder for those who remain; and if, furthermore, we are persuaded that a real defeat in the battle thus abandoned must entail the separation of mankind from the Christ they cleave to with so sincere but so illogical an attachment, then we must not allow sympathy with their spiritual aspirations to silence our expostulations. Not to take away from them 'the better part,' but to make its choice a possible and

reasonable thing for themselves and many more, we must persist in the endeavour to show that the Christ they admire is a truly historic Christ, and that His resurrection from the dead is a fact against which science and philosophy can bring no valid objection, while its historic evidences are unshaken by criticism and research.

A merely intellectual assent to these opinions is incomparably inferior to a loyal and loving reception of spiritual influence, but men will soon cease to sit at the feet of Christ when the history of His life is presented as a thing of divinest beauty, but of which wise men doubt the truth. A loving delight in the beauty of Christ's image is good, and may for a season do good, although its main features are deemed fictitious, but it is not faith in Him such as the Apostles avow and inculcate. The endeavour to reproduce His life as a painter seeks to actualize a subjective ideal, while perpetually baffled by its loveliness, is a totally different thing from the imitation of Him as an exemplar to whom the Almighty God has destined us to be conformed, and who Himself is offered as a pledge, as well as a pattern, of what we shall one day attain. Paul said, 'That life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me'; but if the elements of historic fact are eliminated from that confession, the whole meaning dies out of the words. All the constraint and inspiration of which Paul was conscious were due to his sense of personal relationship with a Christ who had proved His love in certain historic deeds of sacrifice, and still lived to carry on the work

of a guiding Friend and Redeemer to its completion in the heavenly world. Where this belief is exchanged for denials or doubts of the facts alleged, the mighty motive power of personal obligation perishes, and the hope of ever being like Christ becomes indeed—

> 'The desire of the moth for the star,
> Of the night for the morrow,
> The devotion to something afar
> From the sphere of our sorrow.'

When the nature and sphere of faith are thus understood, the ordinary objections which are preferred against the place it occupies in the Christian system are found to refer to something else of which the Bible knows nothing. It does not pretend to be scientific knowledge, therefore Agnosticism has no contradiction to offer without violating its own philosophy. Certain individuals who call themselves Agnostics, but who might most fittingly retain the more antiquated title 'Atheist,' are loud in their denials of what Christians believe, but herein they presumptuously affect a knowledge of the Unknowable. Wiser men have no sympathy with such negative dogmatism. Professor Huxley, who claims 'a sort of patent right' in the word 'Agnostic,' and says 'It is my trade-mark,' wrote a letter lately in which he reminded a certain rather intrusive correspondent that 'true Agnosticism will not forget that existence, motion, and law-abiding operations in nature are more stupendous miracles than any recounted by the mythologies, and that there may be things, not only in the heavens and earth, but beyond the intelligible universe, which "are not dreamt of in our philosophy."' J. S. Mill, after speaking of the

moral sublimity and historic genuineness of the gospel pictures of Jesus Christ, also adds 'that, to the conception of the rational sceptic, it remains a possibility that Christ actually was what He supposed Himself to be . . . a man charged with a special, express and unique commission from God to lead mankind to truth and virtue.' Clearly, then, without violating its own philosophy, Agnosticism can make no denials and no assertions which are fatal to the Christian faith. When man draws a line, and says, 'Here knowledge ceases, but we know that something else exists,' he cannot treat the unknown as non-existent. Still, thought irresistibly goes on. The lines which run out from each human centre of observation and inquiry do not terminate abruptly where the horizon melts away into infinitude. According to their understanding of things visible, men will inevitably form conceptions of the Eternal Cause of All. Even those who most strenuously refuse to regard this Power as a legitimate object of concern, or as a Being towards whom we can have any relative duties, do thereby make an immense assertion concerning the Unknown. In the face of man's religious instincts and history, it is an enormous assumption to affirm that we can have no relations with an invisible Mind and Will. The philosophy which says man cannot discover God or transcend the knowledge of phenomena, should not pretend to say that the Maker of man is unable to know our minds, or unable to send into our world a 'knowable' messenger, such as Mill concedes Christ may have been. Rational scepticism, therefore, is compelled by its own insistance on the limits of possible knowledge to make room for

such faith as Christianity enjoins. Probably one of the most hopeful signs of the present day is the subsidence of that arrogant assumption of scientific omniscience which is marked by the widespread acceptance of the term Agnostic.

Again, the Biblical conception of faith is untouched by assaults on dogma as inferior to conduct. Under various forms these attacks have been launched against Christianity, in the supposed interests of morality, from the days of Paul's Judaizing opponents to those of the Hellenic Matthew Arnold. Mr. Arnold must be honoured for the zeal which he displays for righteousness; but I fear that the Apostle Paul would say of his modern exponent, as he said of his original opponents, that his zeal is 'not according to knowledge.' Virtue is better than dogma, beyond all question. But the great practical problem is, How shall vicious men be made virtuous? How shall selfishness, out of which legions of evil deeds proceed to devastate our social fields, be cast out of human hearts? How shall bitterness be made sweet, and darkness be turned into light? Neither literature nor dogma can do this. J. S. Mill observed (in words already quoted) that 'it would not be easy even for an unbeliever to find a better translation of virtue from the abstract to the concrete than to endeavour so to live that Christ would approve our life.' When he wrote this he may possibly have forgotten that a life devoid of active love for God would never be approved by Christ, and that such a life of unworldly zeal as he commends is far removed from one of mere respect for social duties. But waiving this criticism, and taking the passage to refer to human

relations of justice and mercy, kindness, truth, purity, gentleness, and love, it may serve to enforce a higher truth.

Let us take three representative men. Let the first be a man who endorses Mill's idea, but is an unbeliever in Christ—thinks Him a mere man who died and was buried ages ago, and therefore can have no personal relations with the present generation of men even as a distant spectator. Let the second be a man who holds his opinion about Christ in suspense. He is what Mill calls a 'rational sceptic'—not affirming or denying, but allowing some mild hope of the truth of Christ's Divine commission to tincture his thoughts. Let the third be a man who verily believes that Jesus Christ still lives and reigns, and watches over every human life with the same care as He bestowed upon His followers on earth, and that He is a Judge by whom God will try the secrets of all hearts, making manifest the obscurest characters, and vindicating those who are defamed and wrongfully treated by their fellows. Which of these three men will be the more likely to live as Christ 'would approve'? On whom will the thought of deserving so pure an approbation be most animating? Will it be the first, who is sure Christ is a mere dead Worthy? or the second, who is only half persuaded that the tale has truth? or the third, who in the darkest hours of misjudgment can say like Paul, 'There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give to me at that day: and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved His appearing'?

There can be but one answer to such a question,

and it alone should be decisive; but other considerations may be adduced to show how the Christian faith operates in favour of morality.

Such faith helps to remove the most productive causes of evil. One of the most potent of these causes is a feeling that men must look after their own interests, because no one else can be trusted to do it for them. They see others engrossed in selfish pursuits, while they themselves are pushed and elbowed in the crowd, often having to bear hardness, injustice, and neglect; and this first irritates the worst feelings, and then tends to petrify the heart. But the thought of God's fatherly care and love revealed in Christ is a new fountain of love towards man, and one can learn to love his neighbour, and even his enemies, when convinced that the Good Samaritan is a type of Him who reigns over all the world.

Another potent cause of evil is hopelessness. Men have done wrong, and sullied their own souls; and if they have tried to purify their own affections, and create within themselves a spirit like that admired in Jesus, they have wofully failed. How, then, can they go on striving? But faith in God revealed in Christ is confidence in God's mercy to blot out the past; it is reliance on God's power to direct and uphold the future walk; and it is an assurance of God's purpose to secure a final and eternal victory over sin. Animated by this faith, the vilest characters and the most abject and dejected spirits have, in innumerable instances, arisen to seek after righteousness, and have attained a career of usefulness.

Nor does faith in Christ simply suffice to counteract

these temptations to positive evil. It exalts the whole idea of duty by connecting the work of each passing hour with the interests of eternity, and by bringing the powers of the world above and of the world to come to reinforce the ordinary motives to rectitude. In proportion as this faith is clear and strong, it evokes a spirit not merely of justice but of sacrifice, and reduces to a minimum the pressure of temptation to eye-service towards others, and time-service towards one's self. This faith fires men's souls with a true enthusiasm for humanity. There is a small sect of man-worshippers which claims a monopoly of this virtue, declaring that the binding of religion to a superhuman God has failed, and that its fruits have only been 'dead-sea apples.' But history shows that Christianity was the first to propound the initial idea of humanity as one entity. For such a conception pagan authors may be ransacked in vain; but the Bible is full of it: its pages shine with an enthusiastic glow of desire to see all nations welded into one kingdom, with one language, one sceptre, and one law. Faith in Him who is said to have died to break down all partitions, and reconcile mankind in one body to God, has created a new order of men and women devoted to the ministry of mankind. Irrespective of nation and character, and in the face of hatred and persecution, this enthusiasm is now planting cultivated men as servants to savages in every quarter of the globe where such races remain unreclaimed. The author of the so-called 'Religion of Humanity' wrote a good many years ago: 'The noble missionaries of our faith will find in Africa the greatest stimulus to

exert their intellect, and the fairest field for their active zeal. They will set themselves the task of spreading among the simple African populations the Universal religion. There will be no intermediate step, they will not be required to pass through either Monotheism or even Polytheism. That the success of the effort is possible, is the consequence of the profound affinity between Positivism and Fetishism.'*

Since these words were written, Christians have had enthusiasm enough to explore the Dark Continent, and thousands have been found ready to endure exile and sickness, and to confront premature death, not counting their lives dear unto themselves, for the sake of telling Africans of Christ; but no Positivist has to my knowledge yet gone out either to elevate or to worship humanity in that 'fairest field.'

Passing from these ethical aspects of our subject, it is submitted that faith in God as a Father who has made Himself known to His children commends itself to us as the only thing which can promise satisfaction to our hearts. 'He that trusteth in his own heart' to construct a scheme of the universe is not wise. But when a faith like this is founded on rational grounds, and is the direct continuance into unseen regions of so many lines of knowledge, the fact that it meets the finest feelings of man's nature becomes a strong confirmation of its soundness. Any theory of the universe which tramples on the affections and aspirations of mankind, and offers them dead matter and force when they cry for everlasting love and life, is self-condemned. Even nature bids us

* Comte, 'The Catechism of the Positive Religion,' p. 365.

refuse to regard our deepest yearnings as tantalizing mockeries. Where intense desires are known to exist among lower animals, it is invariably found that they correspond to satisfactory objects. Inward impulses lead some creatures to do things which have no meaning to themselves at the time, but which avail to make provision for a future state of life. Various insects even satisfy their instinctive desires by doing things which propagate plants and flowers; but in no case is instinct a useless lie. How, then, shall we believe this of human desires and hopes? If man's heart—the strongest, tenderest, most mysterious and sensitive of all known things—be not an organized self-tormenting machine, and the cruellest product of blind evolution in the world, there is continuance and sequel for the affections in a future life and a more than human love in Him who made man's heart. There is logic, as well as poetry, in the words of 'The Wanderer,' who cries:

'And shall I find no Father? Shall my being
Aspire in vain for ever, and always tend
To an impossible goal, which none shall reach,—
An aim without an end?

'Or, shall I heed them when they bid me take
No care for aught but what my brain may prove?
I, through whose inmost depths, from birth to death,
Strange heavenward-currents move;

'Vague whispers, inspirations, memories,
Sanctities, yearnings, secret questionings,
And oft amid the fullest blaze of noon,
The rush of hidden wings?

'Nay; my soul spurns it! Less it is to know
Than to have faith: not theirs who cast away
The mind God gave them, eager to adore
Idols of baser clay.

'But theirs, who marking out the bounds of mind,
And where thought rules, content to understand,
Know that beyond its kingdom lies a dread
Immeasurable land.

'A land which is, though fainter than a cloud,
Full of sweet hopes and awful destinies:
A dim land, rising when the eye is clear
Across the trackless seas.'*

There is a time in many lives when the whole being is absorbed and apparently satisfied in the love of others at their side. But this time is brief. The intensity of such love is the measure of the pain it must entail on the survivor. All the reverence and sanctity of love for parents; all the growing into oneness, and the cleaving of soul to soul which hallow married life; and all the joy of being trusted by fair children, is as the brief sunshine which burns to evening and cold night, or as the flowering of plants which beautify the path to those sleeping places where dark yews cast their shadow, and lettered stones betray the impotence of grief. But faith in Christ is faith in Him who said, 'Thy brother shall rise again.' 'I am the resurrection and the life.' It is a faith which casts a soft light of hope on ancient graves, and on the newest turf which covers those we have lost. It preaches of high careers for those cut off in their prime; and of a Divine economy, which does not waste the disciplined experience of venerable sires when they go to the grave like sheaves of corn fully ripe, nor despise the immaturity of tender babes when cut off like fragile blossoms by cold vernal gales. It tells of all the workers and watchers of old time gathered into one

* L. Morris, 'Songs of Two Worlds,' p. 84.

rejoicing host with those who enter into their labours and see the days they toiled and suffered to bring in. When a man's heart is riven by some sudden stroke, or dies down under the strain of a protracted grief; when his plans are thwarted—his friends untrue or gone away; when he feels the infirmities of his own nature hindering action, and sin marring his best deeds; when in old age he looks out and beholds dimness and a cloud, and at the thought of going forth into unknown realms his native clinging to familiar scenes grow strong; then this faith in the unseen God made known in Christ unfolds the vision of a heritage no enemy can wrest away, because the Lord who rules throughout the universe has called him 'child.'

Finally, while faith, as we have seen, is indispensable to any intelligent intercourse with God, and while the Christian faith, rightly understood, is consistent with any true philosophy, favourable to morality and satisfying to the heart, it also commends itself as giving completeness and grandeur to our intellectual conceptions of the universe. It instructs us that man as a spiritual being has relationship not only with the beasts of these earthly fields, with the dust of this perishable globe, and with the memories of buried ancestors, but also with great thinkers and glorified servants who live in other worlds. It opens our minds to regard those orbs which move with measured harmony in space as bound together by a common kingship, and an all-embracing moral government, as well as by an all-pervading physical order. By such vast and ennobling thoughts it lifts the mind out of that insular egotism and provincial narrowness which otherwise beset us as

the tenants of a small and obscure world. This globe which seems so vast to its inhabitants is not visible as a speck of light from many stars which stud our midnight sky. But faith in a common King and Father who has deigned to visit us in Christ unites our history and destiny with those of every habitable sphere.

> 'Humble lives, to low thought, and low; but linked to the thinker's eye,
> By a bond that is stronger than death, with the lights of the farthest sky.'

Physical science can only regard other worlds as lonely islands in an untravelled ocean of ether. But faith in the moral order and federal unity of the cosmos teaches us to view them as 'many mansions' of one great House, between which ceaseless correspondence passes, and a holy commerce is maintained by ministers of God who do His pleasure. It enables us to regard the human race as one out of many tribes in the cosmic Israel of God, all journeying towards one Holy Hill of beatific vision, and all destined to worship in an Eternal Temple which shall be a house of praise for all worlds, when the Mystery of God now darkly working shall be finished, 'according to the good tidings which He declared to His servants the prophets.'

*Elliot Stock, Paternoster Row, London.*

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library
1 1012 01012 8132